West Yorkshire
Probation Trust

OASys: what is it designed to do?

OASys is short for Offender Assessment System. It is a national system that was developed jointly by Probation and Prisons and is now in use in its electronic version in all probation areas.

Courts will find that many Pre Sentence Reports (PSRs) they receive will have been written following an OASys assessment. New guidance to Probation on the court report framework that operates under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 makes clear that the OASys is the cornerstone of probation's work with offenders.

However, an OASys assessment will not be completed at pre-sentence stage in the more straightforward cases.

OASys enables the probation officer conducting the assessment to understand:

- The offender's likelihood of reconviction (low, medium or high)
- The risk of harm he or she represents (low, medium, high or very high)
- And the factors that must be addressed, such as drug misuse, if the offender's criminality is to be tackled.

The sentence plan that will determine the way the offender will be managed after sentence derives from OASys. The sentence plan and the OASys assessment will be reviewed and updated periodically throughout the sentence.

Components of OASys

The main body of OASys consists of 12 sections which help probation staff to understand the offender's likelihood of reconviction and the so-called 'criminogenic factors' which need to be tackled.

The 12 sections are:

1) Offending information
2) Analysis of offences
3) Accommodation
4) Education, training and employability
5) Financial management and income
6) Relationships
7) Lifestyle and associates
8) Drug misuse
9) Alcohol misuse
10) Emotional well-being
11) Thinking and behaviour
12) Attitudes

Each of these carries a numerical weighting dependent upon the research evidence as to its predictiveness of re-conviction. Completing all 12 sections will generate a numerical score (though this will not be shared with the court). Also contributing to the overall assessment is an optional self-assessment form which can be valuable in providing the offender's perspective on his or her criminal behaviour.

In more detail, the 12 sections cover the following ground:

The **offending information** section examines current and previous offences. Research studies show that criminal history is the best predictor of future convictions. Current offence(s) are further detailed in the **analysis of offences** section which helps to identify risk of serious harm, risks to the individual and other risks.

The **accommodation** section looks at whether accommodation is available, the quality of accommodation and whether its location encourages re-offending or creates a risk of harm.

Research demonstrates that offenders are generally less well educated and trained than other groups in society. They are more likely to be unemployed, have a poor history of employment and express a dislike of work. The **education, training and employability** section captures this data.

The **financial management and income** section highlights any evidential link between the inability to cope with financial difficulties and reconviction.

The **relationships** section assesses whether the offender's satisfaction with relationships and the stability of those relationships have a link to his or her offending behaviour. This section also seeks evidence of domestic abuse, either as a perpetrator or victim.

The **lifestyle and associates** section examines aspects of the offender's current lifestyle. A clear link exists between how offenders spend their time, the people they mix with and the likelihood of reconviction.

The **drug misuse** section identifies the extent and type of drug misuse and its effects on an offender's life. Research consistently links misuse of drugs with re-offending.

The next section considers whether **alcohol misuse** is a significant factor in previous or current offending. This is often linked to risk of harm.

The **emotional well-being** section examines the extent to which emotional problems interfere with the offender's functioning or are associated with a risk of harm to self or others. Mental health problems such as anxiety and depression relate to offending for certain groups.

The **thinking and behaviour** section assesses the offender's application of reasoning, especially to social problems. Research indicates that offenders

tend not to think things through, plan, or consider the consequences of their behaviour and do not see things from other people's perspective. Those with a number of such cognitive deficits will be more likely to re-offend.

The **attitudes** section considers the offender's attitude towards offending and supervision. A growing body of research demonstrates that pro-criminal attitudes are predictive of reconviction. Addressing attitudes can reduce the likelihood of reconviction.

Offender Assessment
A final **health and other considerations** section does not contribute to assessing the risk of reconviction or harm. However, assessors use this section when considering suitability for Community Sentences (which may involve physical work), electronic monitoring and programmes. This information will mainly be used by the Probation Service but also helps the Prison Service determine suitable allocations to work and in sentence planning.

Additional assessments
As the probation officer works through OASys he or she may be alerted to the need for other assessments. These include:

- Sex offender assessment
- Violent offender assessment
- Basic Skills assessment
- Drug assessment
- Alcohol assessment
- Mental Health assessment
- Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder assessment
- Domestic violence assessment

Analysis of the risk of harm, risks to the individual and other risks
OASys contains a comprehensive risk of serious harm analysis and assessment. This includes:

- A screening section
- A full analysis section
- A harm summary section which includes a risk of harm management plan for use when required

The risk of serious harm sections draw together information from earlier sections of OASys in a comprehensive and systematic way so that the assessor can make an informed judgement on issues of risk and harm under various headings.

The following risks are addressed:

- Harm to the public
- Harm to known adults
- Harm to staff
- Harm to prisoners
- Harm to children

- Harm to the individual (suicide, self-harm, coping in custody or hostel setting, vulnerability)
- Other risks (escape/abscond, control issues, breach of trust)

Levels of risk of serious harm used in OASys

Low - no significant current indicators of risk of serious harm.

Medium - identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. Potential to cause harm but unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances.

High – identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. Potential event could happen at any time and impact would be serious.

Very high – imminent risk of serious harm. Potential event is more likely than not to happen imminently. The impact would be serious.

A risk management plan will be drawn up for medium level risk and above, appropriate to the assessed level of risk of serious harm. The plan will link to other risk management frameworks such as child protection procedures and the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) that exist across the country. Under MAPPA, more than one agency is likely to be actively involved with Probation in managing the risk in high and very high risk or serious harm cases.