

The Offender Assessment System (OASys): Development, validation and use in practice

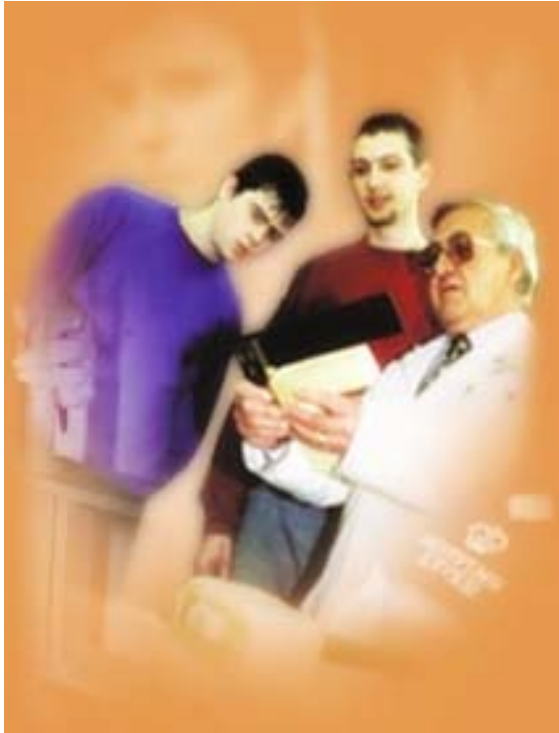
**Dr Robin Moore
Head of O-DEAT
National Offender Management Service**

Presentation overview

- The development, structure and use of OASys
- The evidence-base for OASys
- Using OASys data for management information
- What has OASys achieved?
- Future developments

The development, structure and use of OASys

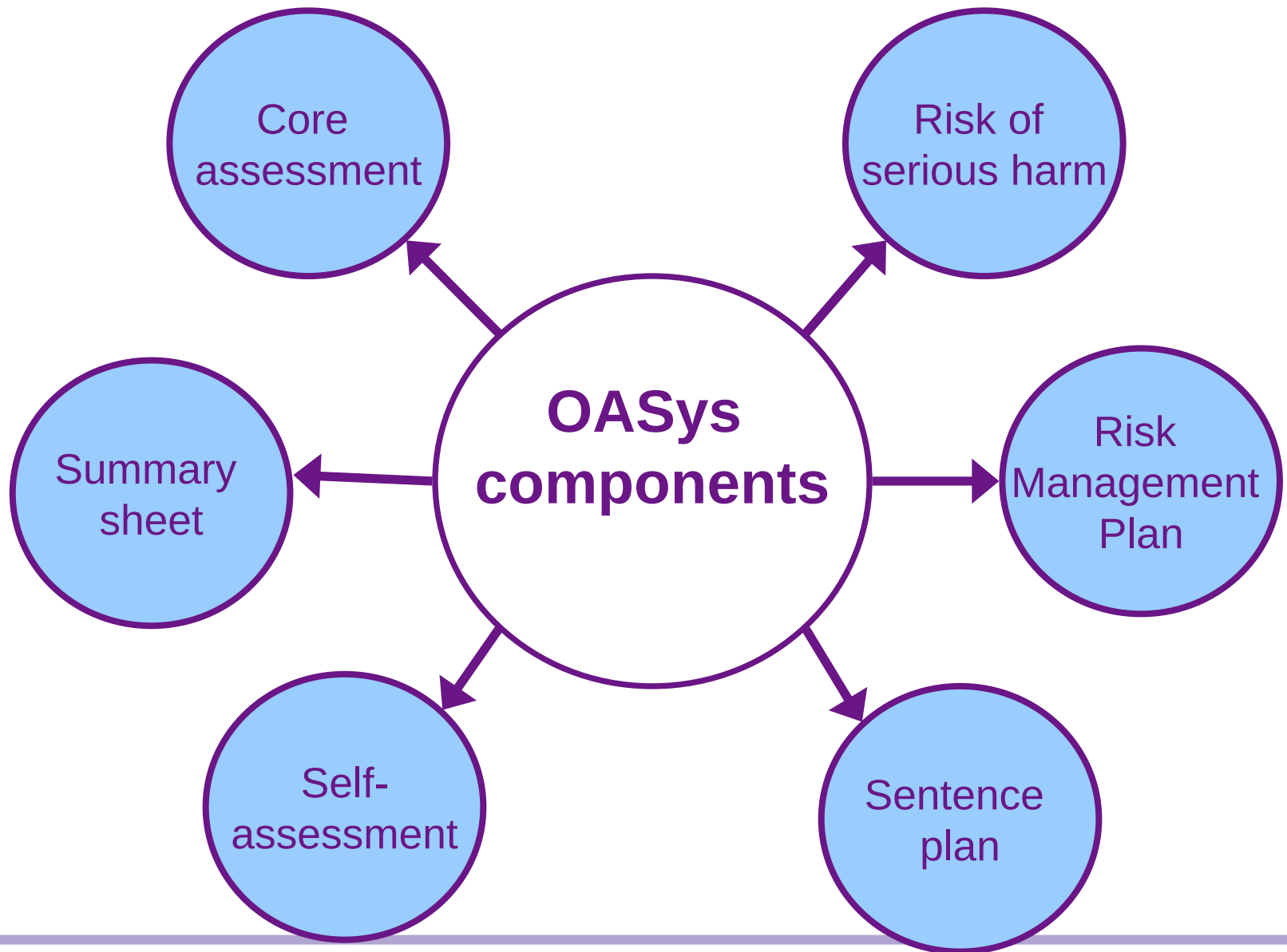
What were the objectives for OASys?



- To assess how likely an offender is to reoffend.
- To identify and classify offending-related needs.
- To assess risk of serious harm, risks to the individual and other risks.
- To assist with management of risk of serious harm.
- To indicate the need for further specialist assessments.
- To link the assessment to the sentence plan.
- To measure change during the offender's sentence.

‘Good assessment’ is recognised to be the ‘starting point’ for managing offenders. This is reflected in the acronym of ASPIRE:





When are OASys assessments done?

1. Pre-Sentence
 - To produce a pre-sentence report for the courts, recommending the most appropriate sentence
 - Includes interventions to be undertaken with the offender
2. At the start of their sentence
 - In prisons
 - In the community
3. Reviewed regularly
4. Key decision points
 - To determine whether Parole / ROTL / HDC is appropriate
5. On termination of the sentence

Who administers OASys?

- In the community
 - Probation Officers for high risk / high need offenders
 - Probation Service Officers for lower risk / lower need offenders
- In prison
 - Prison Officers
 - Seconded Probation staff
- The OASys assessment must be completed following an interview with the offender, using both collateral and file information.
 - The collateral information provides primary information and helps evaluate the credibility of the information gained during the interview.
 - The interview provides information not available from other sources, e.g. attitudes towards offending.

Quality Assurance

- Training
 - All assessors must be trained before they are authorised to complete OASys assessments.
- Countersigning
 - In the prisons, all assessments are countersigned by a senior practitioner.
 - In probation, Probation Service Officers have all assessments countersigned by a senior practitioner. Probation Officers only have high risk offender assessments countersigned.
- Quality Assurance (QA) package
 - A new QA package has been rolled out, consisting of a training package for senior practitioners who review assessments, and a tool to record QA results. In addition, regular Quality Assurance events are held at a regional level, where prisons and probation areas review a sample of assessments, to provide a benchmark.

The evidence-base for OASys

Initial evidence base

- Evolved from clinical and actuarial assessments.
- Evaluation of other assessment systems in the UK.
- 'What Works' literature on the role of social factors in reoffending.
- Literature reviews of risk of harm and dangerousness.
- A number of user surveys were undertaken.
- Extensive pilot studies across the Probation and Prison Services.

Assessing reliability and validity

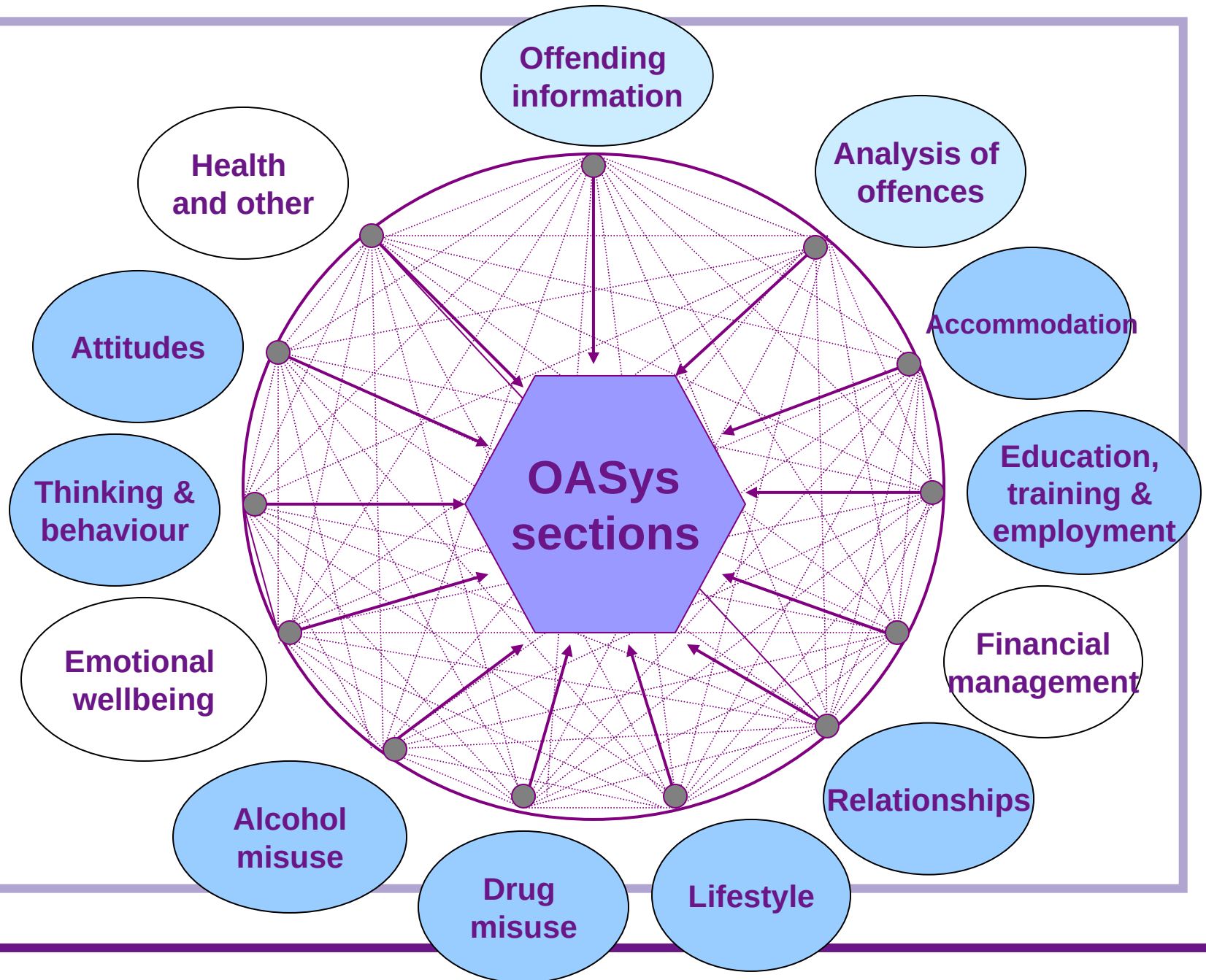
- The value of OASys data is dependent upon the assessment tool being both **reliable** and **valid**.
- For the core OASys assessment to be a **reliable** instrument, it needs to produce consistent measurements.
- To be **valid** it needs to be measuring what it is intended to measure, i.e. criminogenic needs and likelihood of reoffending.
- Recent analysis has focused upon inter-rater reliability, internal reliability, construct validity and predictive validity.

OASys predictors of reoffending

- Two new predictors of reoffending were implemented in August 2009. They have strong predictive validity, and allow offenders' progress during sentence to be reflected by rescored dynamic risk factors.
- The **OASys Violence Predictor (OVP)** predicts violence against the person and related offences such as criminal damage, public order and robbery. The **OASys General reoffending Predictor (OGP)** predicts most other non-sexual offences. Both predictors comprise 60% static and 40% dynamic factors.
 - Static factors are previous criminality, being young and being male.
 - Dynamic risk factors for violent-type reoffending are (strongest first): alcohol misuse; employability; attitudes; temper control; failing to recognise impact of offending; accommodation; and current psychiatric treatment.
 - Dynamic risk factors for general reoffending are (strongest first): drug misuse; accommodation; employability; regular activities encouraging offending; attitudes; thinking and behaviour.

Criminogenic need measurements

- The criminogenic need measurements were also revised in August 2009. There are now eight scored dynamic criminogenic needs (31 questions).
- Financial management and emotional wellbeing are no longer scored – analysis of combined OASys/PNC data indicated that these sections measure distinct problem areas but not independently significant criminogenic needs (for females as well as males). However, assessors are still able to make a clinical judgment as to whether the sections are linked to offending behaviour in each individual case.
- Questions no longer scored in the eight other sections are those which: (i) had a detrimental impact in terms of internal reliability and/or low item-scale correlations; and/or (ii) fell within non-corresponding factors.
- The cut-off points for the criminogenic need measurements have been re-aligned according to reoffending rates across the scales.



Publication links

- A compendium of OASys research and analysis has been published as Ministry of Justice Research Series 16/09:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/compendium-research-analysis-offender-mgt-system.htm>

- Accompanying Research Summaries have also been published:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/offender-assessment-system.htm>

Using OASys data for Management Information

OASys has the capacity to provide valuable management information, some of which will be used by practitioners to develop **profiles** of the offenders they are working with and to evaluate overall **outcomes**. Information will also be of use to local managers, to enable them to identify which risk factors are most common within their local offender population and to help ensure that adequate **provision** has been made for them. When applied on a national basis, OASys will provide a profile of offenders and their needs, and will permit **resources** to be allocated effectively

(Home Office, 2002:3-4)

Criminogenic needs (OASys assessments 2009/10)

OASys section	Percentage of offenders assessed as having a need		
	Community sentences (n=113,566)	Custodial sentences (n=19,225)	Suspended sentences (n=50,977)
Accommodation	33.9%	44.0%	31.0%
Education, training and employment	58.8%	65.0%	54.9%
Relationships	59.7%	53.9%	58.1%
Lifestyle and associates	52.6%	75.8%	54.2%
Drug misuse	35.6%	48.1%	32.7%
Alcohol misuse	36.8%	18.6%	34.9%
Thinking and behaviour	52.7%	56.6%	53.5%
Attitudes	47.6%	60.3%	47.9%
Ave. no. of criminogenic needs	3.8	4.2	3.7

What has OASys achieved?

Main achievements

- Standardised measurements of risk and need.
- Defensible decision making.
- Improved targeting of interventions.
- Improved offender profiling and resource planning.
- Assisted with research projects, e.g. evaluating effectiveness of interventions.
- Ultimately OASys has contributed to the NOMS objectives of reducing reoffending and protecting the public, while ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively across the Prison and Probation Services.

Future developments

OASys Review Group

- Developing proposals for a differentiated approach to assessment and review which includes a basic assessment that can be used by all offenders in prison and probation, with subsequent layers of assessment linked to risk and need.

OASys-R (End 2011)

- OASys-R will establish a single Prisons and Probation OASys assessment tool on a modern IT platform with full inter-connectivity between the two Services.