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Thames Valley Police Drug diversion scheme

Drug use and the associated costs to society 1



The cost:



Links to serious violence:

Users 10%

9 in every 1,000 people in England in 2014/15 was a heroin and/or crack user.

Crack users

The number of crack users in England increased by 10% (from 167,000 to 183,000) between 2011/12 and 2014/15.

Treatment for crack cocaine problems 14%

There was a 14% increase between 2015/16 and 2016/17 in the number of people presenting to treatment for crack cocaine problems in England.

Heroin & crack cocaine

Crack cocaine purity 71%

in England and Wales increased from 36% to 71% between 2013 and 2016.

Drugs are one of the main drivers of the recent rise in serious violence.

Drugs are associated with about half of the increase in homicides between 2014/15 and 2016/17. In the last year, there has been a 17% increase in the number of Organised Crime Groups associated with crack who have violent capability.

Acquisitive crimes by users 45%

An estimated 45% of acquisitive crimes are committed by regular heroin/crack cocaine users.

Heroin/crack use could account for at least half of the rise in acquisitive crime in England and Wales in the 1980s and 1990s, and one quarter to one third of the fall in acquisitive crime to 2012.

County lines

There is evidence of county lines activity in 88% of police forces in England and Wales.

The NCA conservatively estimate that there are at least 720 different lines in England and Wales.

85% of police forces reported that county lines groups used knives. 74% reported they used firearms.

65% of police forces reported the exploitation of children by county lines groups – either through human trafficking, child sexual exploitation or coercing them to act as drug runners.

Drug use amongst school children

The proportion of school children (11-15s) who have used any drug (excluding NPS) increased from 10% in 2014 to 15% in 2016.

Class A drug use amongst young people

Convictions 77%

Convictions of young people (10-17s) for Class A drug production and possession with intent to supply have increased by 77% between 2012 and 2016, 3 times the equivalent increase among adult offenders.

Users 9%

Class A drug use among 16-24s is at the highest level since 2005/06, with 9% having used a Class A drug in the last year.

What's the real damage

- Drug related deaths are at the highest recorded level UK - 5543 (ONS)
- Around 1 in 11 adults aged 16-59 used a controlled drug in the past year (ONS)
- Around 1 in 5 (20%) of 16 to 24yr olds used a controlled drug in the past year – That's 1.3million people (ONS)
- 14% increase between 2015/16 and 2016/17 in the number of people presenting to treatment for crack cocaine problems in England (Source: NHS digital / NPCC)
- In excess of 40k people arrested in the UK for possession offences (MoJ)
- There are approx. 300k people with Heroin addiction registered in the UK (PHE)
- A black person, is 11.8 times more likely to be convicted of possessing cannabis than a white person (Release drugs, colour of injustice)

Current Approach

- Current strategy of prohibition aims to protect public health, prevent harm to others, prevent the spread of crime with associated drug use, this is not working as drugs are more and more readily available (Clutterbuck, 1995; UK Drug Policy Commission, 2008; Albrecht & Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2011).
- The penalties associated with prohibition are in place to act as a deterrent. The more harmful the drug, the greater the penalty, the greater the deterrent to possession (Husak & De Marneffe, 2005) .
- Proponents of prohibition argue that a more tolerant approach to drugs would make it more socially acceptable, which would lead to an increase in usage (Van Dijk, 1998; Korf, 2002).
- The government 2017 evaluation of the 'Drug Strategy 2010' surmised that:
“there is, in general, a lack of robust evidence as to whether capture and punishment serves as a deterrent for drug use”



WHY DO WE ARREST?

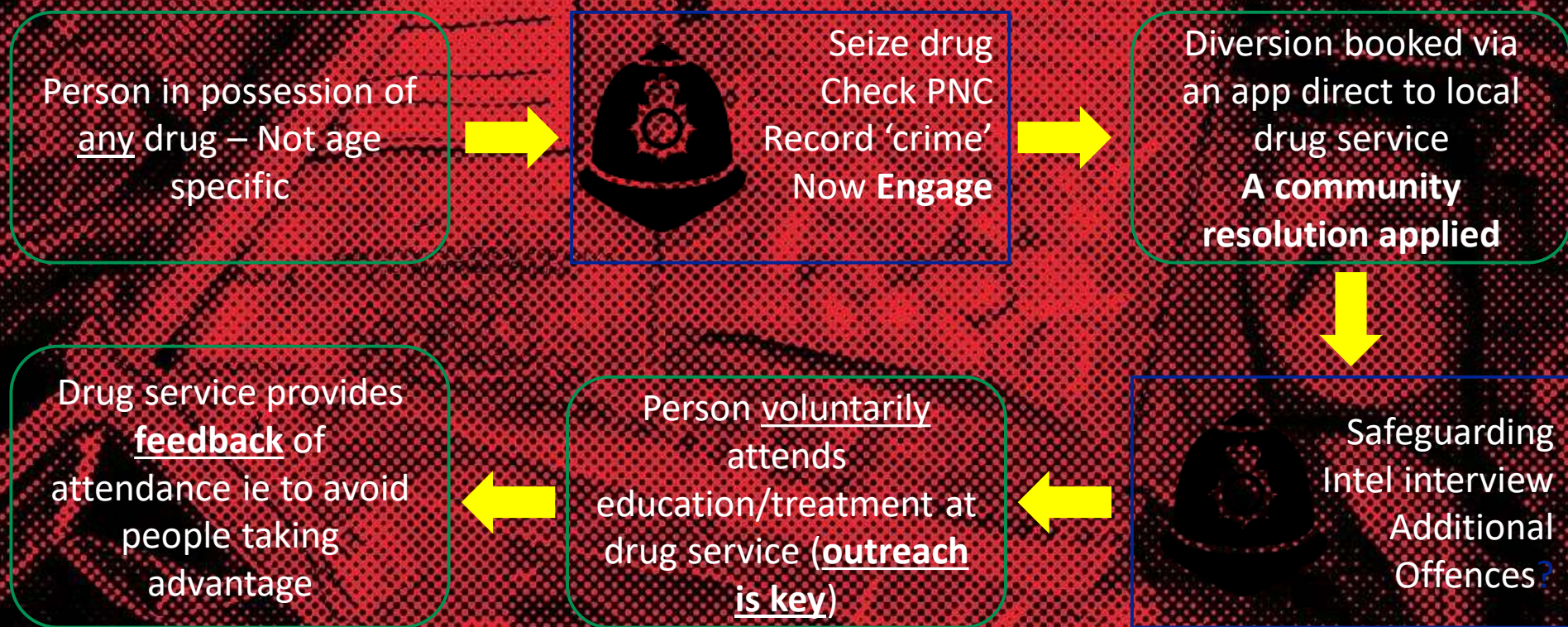
- The deterrent has already failed for those found in possession of controlled drugs.
- When dealt with by way of warning, caution of fine in court, the users do not receive assistance to help them stop using drugs.
- Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that rather than deter persons from further drug use, the stigmatisation of a criminal record marginalises and prevents their reintegration back into society (Collinson, 1993; Buchanan & Young, 2009)

Diversion



The aims..

- 1. Reduce drugs usage (Greenwald, 2009; Hughes & Stevens, 2012)
- 2. Reduce drug related death and victimisation (Stevens, 2007; French, 2015; Clausen, 2017)
- 3. Reduce drug related offending (Best, 2003; March, 2005; Oteo, 2015)
- 4. Reduce costs for the police and courts (Home Office, 2015)



Diversion is not decriminalisation, although a community resolution is invisible to a standard DBS check (Lammy 2016). Unlimited opportunities for diversion. A gateway for assessment, education/treatment/intervention pathways where appropriate and better outcomes for people found with drugs.

Results

In 10 months:

- 208 adult referrals made. Out of these 30% have attended and completed the diversion course.
- 32 child referrals made, 26 are currently engaged or have completed the diversion course, 6 refused to engage – 81% engagement rate.
- Non cash savings estimated to be £26,000
- Self reporting data from users following intervention indicates that 43% have stopped using following intervention.

Officer feedback

- “I thought it was a good scheme when the training was delivered (& I can be cynical enough about a couple of things we’ve had over the years!).... I thought it was pretty straight forward and I would definitely use it again.” (Case 20)
- “It’s really easy and simple to use. So much quicker than what I would have had to do otherwise.... I would have had to send the drugs off for testing, RUI’d him, it would have been on my screen for 8 weeks. This was really easy. I like it.” (Case 2)
- “I have used this a couple of times now.... I have found it really easy and quick. I have also had a thank you from a detainee that I dealt with to say he was sorry for his arrest and feels he was treated fairly.” (Case 24)

Officer feedback

- “Found it really simple, it’s nice something being implemented where it’s really easy and quick to do.” (Case 25)
- “I found the scheme really good. I thought it was a great tool to have access to during my dealings with the male that had been detained. I will look forward to using this again especially as it was easy and straight forward as well.” (Case 40)
- “The process itself is really straight forward. I was a little bit sceptical with the introduction of the diversion but I have been able to see the benefits over the last week.” (Case 56)

Officer feedback

“Recently in West Berkshire I have noticed a decrease in County line activity and in my opinion the diversion scheme is a contributing factor in lowering the demand for Class A drugs, along with other factors such as house closures and pursuit of the suppliers.

I have been speaking with local Class A drug users some of who appear to be in recovery and some, who are using drugs considerably less.

I have noticed the community have also been discussing those who have managed to get clean and I believe it is encouraging others to seek treatment.

The diversion scheme I would suggest is assisting in rapport building within the sub culture as the Police are no longer criminalizing those most at risk and in return it creates a hostile environment to those supplying as the community offer up information to assist law enforcement to reduce the temptation on the street”. (case 26)



Thank you

Support not punish

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