

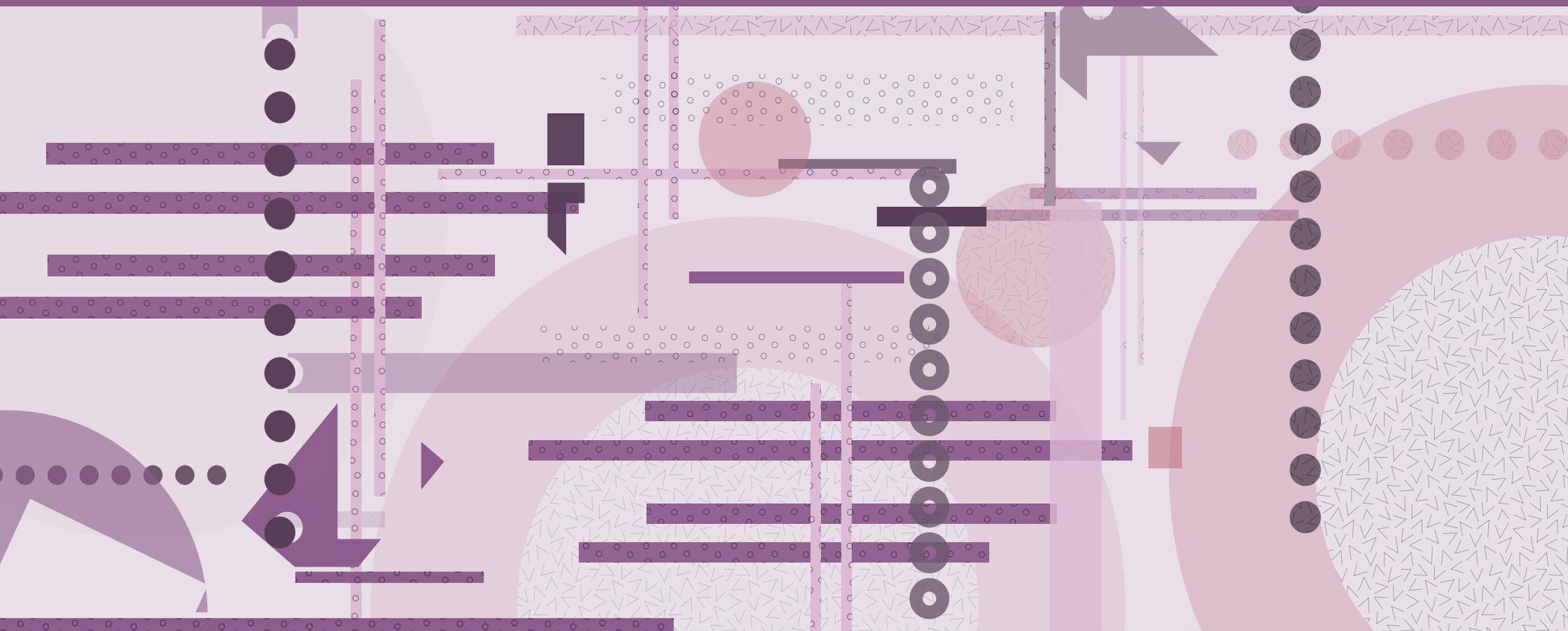
# Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme



Wirral Drug Testing Profile (2013/14 to 2015/16)

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## Key findings

- Of the 27,138 attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2013 and March 2016, just under one in five (19%) were conducted at Wirral custody suite (n=5,238).
- The number of attempted drug tests in Wirral reduced by 68% over the three-year period, with the greatest reduction between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (63% decrease).
- The positive drug test rate increased year on year. In 2015/16, the rate was 64% which is above the figure for tests across Merseyside (60%).
- Two-thirds (66%) of positive tests were for some form of opiate metabolites (49% for both cocaine and opiates; 17% for opiates only), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (34%).
- Almost half (48%) of offences recorded at the time of the drug test were theft, followed by 18% Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences.
- The majority (84%) of arrestees in Wirral were male.
- Those aged between 35 and 39 years accounted for the largest proportion of positive tests (20%), followed by arrestees aged between 40 and 44 years (19%).
- The majority (97%) were White European.
- Over six in ten (63%) were resident in Wirral, followed by over three in ten (31%) resident in Liverpool.
- There were 91 arrestees of the 2015 Wirral cohort who were arrested and tested more than once at a custody suite in Merseyside, representing just over two in five (41%) of the cohort.

## Introduction

In Wirral, the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) process begins with the police arresting and drug testing potential drug using offenders. If offenders test positive for Class A drugs (opiates only, cocaine only or both [cocaine and opiates]), they are served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police. This is a compulsory legal sanction for the individual to attend up to two appointments (initial/follow-up RA) with a drugs worker. During these assessments the drugs worker will assess the individual's drug and offending behaviour and, if necessary, encourage them to engage with drug treatment services (Home Office, 2010). Failure by the individual to attend the assessment(s) would result in additional breach charges being brought against them. For this reason, the police play a very important role in the early stages of this process.

Until mid-2015, Test on Arrest in Merseyside occurred when an adult was arrested for a trigger offence (offences that have a clear link to substance misuse; generally involving stealing, theft, fraud or drug) or an offence where a custody Inspector suspects specified Class A drug use was a causal or contributory factor. After a successful pilot in Wirral early in 2015, Merseyside Police rolled out a targeted drug testing approach in its custody suites, with this system fully implemented by August 2015. The targeted testing approach involves a set list of questions around drug use that should be considered before a decision is made on whether the arrestee is drug tested. The main aim of targeted testing is to reduce the number of negative drug tests carried out in the custody suite setting while ensuring drug using offenders continue to be tested and referred to drug treatment services through the RA process.

This Drug Testing Profile for Wirral presents drug testing data between April 2013 and March 2016, with an emphasis on the most recent financial year (2015/16). This profile will contextualise Merseyside Police drug testing data by providing numbers and trends of drug using offenders identified through this route into the DIP system and a demographic

overview of the individuals. As the profile will look at three years of data, we will be able to examine the impact, if any, targeted testing has had. This profile also provides recommendations for local government and commissioners and service providers in terms of the efficient use of resources and effective services locally and across Merseyside.

## Drug tests across Wirral

There is one custody suite in Wirral, which participated in the aforementioned targeted testing pilot between January and March 2015, before its rollout across Merseyside later in the year. Wirral custody suite was closed for part of May, all of June and part of July 2015. During this time individuals were drug tested at other custody suites across Merseyside.

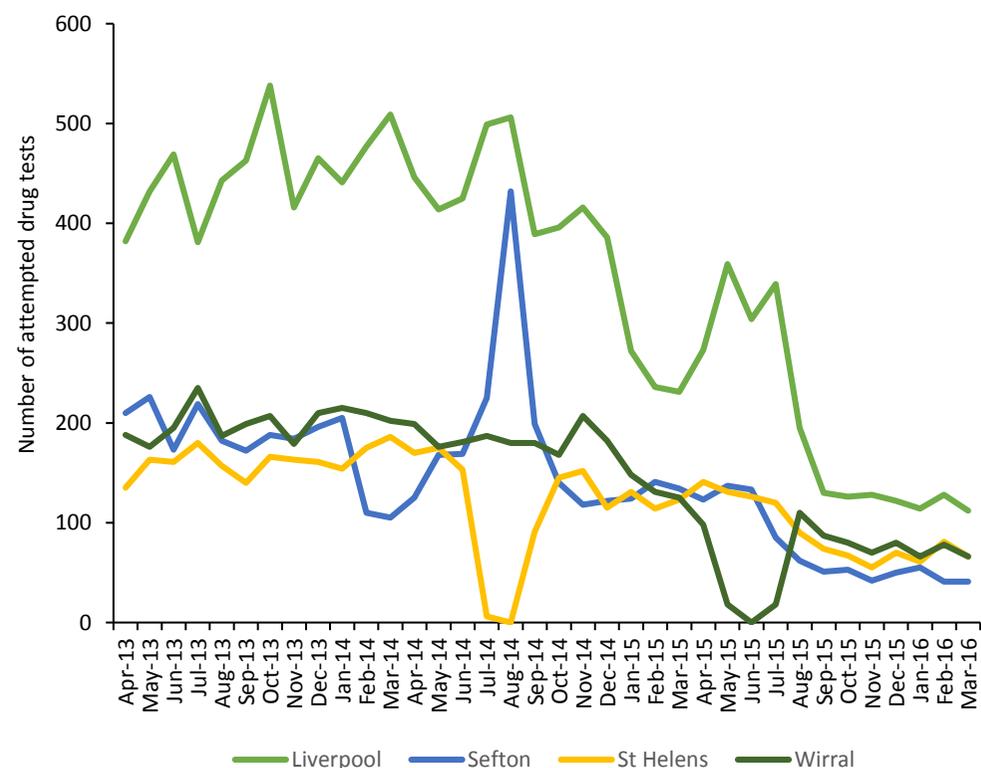
Between April 2013 and March 2016, there were a total of 27,138 attempted drug tests in Merseyside, of which just under two in five (19%) were conducted at Wirral's custody suite (n=5,238; Table 1). The number of attempted drug tests reduced by 68% between 2013/14 and 2015/16. Notably, the number of attempted tests in 2015/16 reduced by over three-fifths (63%) when compared to the previous year, which is likely as a result of the implementation of targeted testing.

**Table 1: Number of attempted drug tests in Merseyside by custody suite and year (2013/14-2015/16)**

Custody suite	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Belle Vale	1,042	194	25	<b>1,261</b>
Copy Lane	1,853	2,080	859	<b>4,792</b>
St Anne's Street	3,747	2,781	1,831	<b>8,359</b>
Southport	317	17	14	<b>348</b>
St Helens	1,941	1,375	1,082	<b>4,398</b>
Wavertree	627	1,641	474	<b>2,742</b>
<b>Wirral</b>	<b>2,403</b>	<b>2,064</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>5,238</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,930</b>	<b>10,152</b>	<b>5,056</b>	<b>27,138</b>

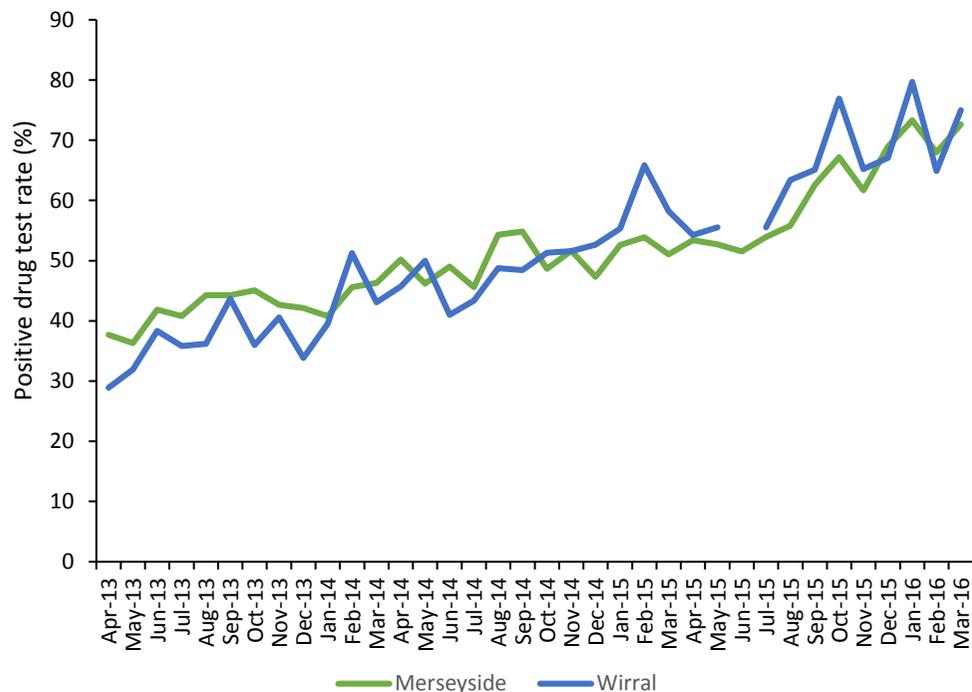
Figure 1 compares the number of attempted drug tests in Wirral with Liverpool, Sefton and St Helens (there are no custody suites in Knowsley). The number of tests in Wirral dropped in January 2015 when targeted testing was introduced in its suite, with the lowest numbers of tests in May 2015 (n=18), June 2015 (n=0) and July 2015 (n=18), when the suite was (partially) closed. The number of tests conducted in Liverpool between May and July 2015 increased which indicates this is where arrestees were taken to during the closure of Wirral's custody suite. Excluding when the suite was closed, the number of attempted tests was lowest in January and March 2016 (n=66 each).

**Figure 1: Number of attempted drug tests by area and month/year (2013/14-2015/16)**



The positive drug test rate (the number of individuals testing positive ÷ the number of individuals successfully tested) for those tested in Wirral increased year on year, particularly following the implementation of targeted testing in its custody suite (Figure 2). Wirral's figures follow similar patterns to the figures for Merseyside overall.

**Figure 2: Positive drug test rate by month/year (2013/14-2015/16)\***



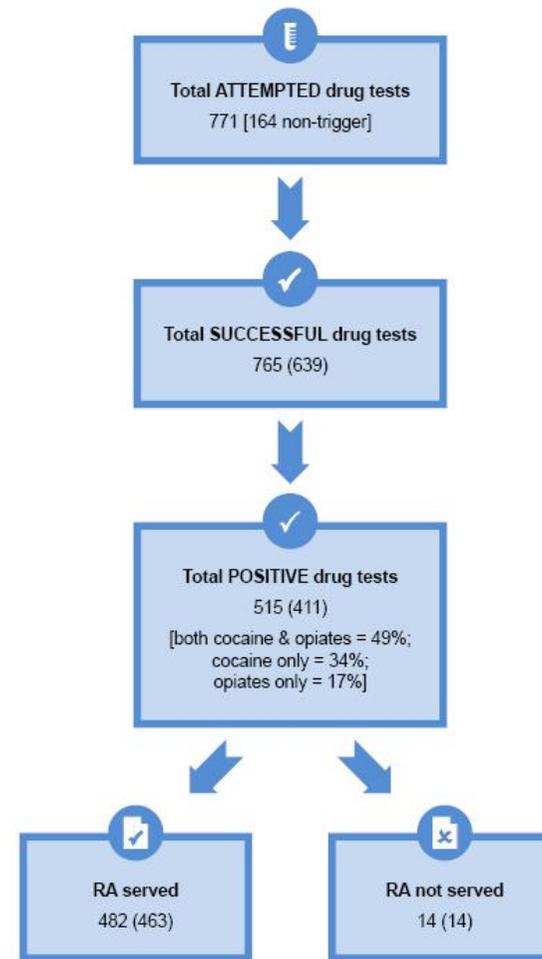
\* Wirral custody suite was closed for the whole of June 2015.

### Drug testing activity in Wirral

Figure 3 shows the drug testing activity for those arrested and drug tested in Wirral between April 2015 and March 2016. Of the 639 individuals successfully tested in 2015/16, 411 individuals tested positive; this equates to a positive drug test rate of 64%, which is above the figure for all those arrested and tested across Merseyside (60%).

Two-thirds (66%) of positive tests were for some form of opiate metabolites (49% for both cocaine and opiates; 17% for opiates only), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (34%). In comparison to all positive tests across Merseyside, Wirral had more positive tests for opiate metabolites (Merseyside=58%) and less for cocaine only (Merseyside=42%).

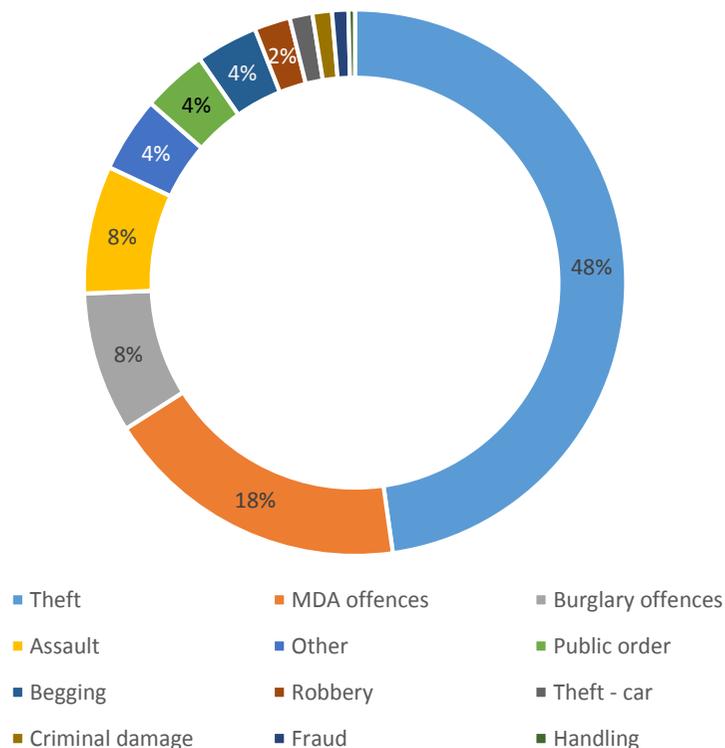
**Figure 3: Drug testing activity in Wirral (2015/16)^**



^ Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets.

Police drug testing data capture the offences recorded at the time of the drug test. Theft accounted for just under half (48%) of offences reported by Wirral custody suite for those testing positive between April 2015 and March 2016, followed by just under one in five (18%) Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (Figure 4). In comparison, data for all positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2015/16 reported 43% theft and 24% MDA offences.

**Figure 4: Positive drug tests in Wirral by offence recorded at time of test (2015/16)**



## Demographics

Table 2 presents the age group and gender of those testing positive in Wirral custody suite in 2015/16. The majority (84%) were male, similar to the overall Merseyside figure (83%). Arrestees in Wirral aged between 35 and 39 years accounted for one in five (20%) positive

tests in 2015/16, followed by those aged between 40 and 44 years (19%), similar to proportions for all positive tests across Merseyside.

**Table 2: Positive drug tests in Wirral by age group and gender (2015/16)**

Age group	Females		Males		Total	
<b>18-24</b>	0	0%	59	14%	59	11%
<b>25-29</b>	11	13%	65	15%	76	15%
<b>30-34</b>	11	13%	56	13%	67	13%
<b>35-39</b>	25	30%	77	18%	102	20%
<b>40-44</b>	13	15%	85	20%	98	19%
<b>45-49</b>	19	23%	54	13%	73	14%
<b>50+</b>	5	6%	35	8%	40	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority (97%) of those arrested and testing positive in Wirral between April 2015 and March 2016 were White European.

Where recorded, just over three in five (63%) of those tested in Wirral were resident in Wirral, followed by just over three in ten (31%) resident in Liverpool.

## Re-presentation

Table 3 shows arrestees who have tested positive between January and March 2015 in Wirral custody suite. It reports the frequency of their re-presentation and subsequent testing in the year following their initial positive test across Merseyside.

There were 91 arrestees of the 2015 Wirral cohort who were arrested and tested more than once at a custody suite in Merseyside, representing just over two in five (41%) of the cohort.

**Table 3: Re-presentation of clients testing positive (end March 2016)**

Number of arrest occasions	n	%
One	131	59%
Two	50	23%
Three	17	8%
Four	10	5%
Five	4	2%
Six	5	2%
Eight	3	1%
Nine	2	1%
<b>Clients presenting more than once</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>41.0%</b>

The rate of re-presentation across the other Merseyside areas are calculated using a different method to Wirral. When looking at Wirral’s re-presentation using the same processes used in the other areas, there were 113 arrestees who tested positive in Wirral’s custody suite between April 2015 and March 2016 that subsequently re-presented and were tested again at a Merseyside custody suite during the time period. This represents 27.5% of the total individuals testing positive in 2015/16 and is somewhat higher than the overall Merseyside re-presentation rate (20.4%).

## Summary

- In Wirral and across Merseyside overall, the number of attempted drug tests has decreased, particularly between 2014/15 and 2015/16, which is likely as a result of targeted testing.
- The positive drug test rate has increased year on year in Wirral and across Merseyside overall, particularly following the implementation of targeted testing.

- Across Merseyside, slightly more tested positive for opiate metabolites than cocaine only. In Wirral, there was a higher proportion testing positive for opiate metabolites compared to other areas and Merseyside overall.
- In Wirral and across Merseyside overall, theft accounted for the largest proportion of offences, followed by MDA offences.
- In general, the demographic profile of those arrested and drug tested across Merseyside was male, aged between 25 and 44 years with similar proportions across these age groups, of White European ethnicity and residents of Liverpool. Wirral had a slightly higher proportion of arrestees aged between 35 and 44 years, over three-fifths were residents of Wirral and three in ten were residents of Liverpool.
- The rate of re-presentation of clients through the drug testing process across Merseyside is variable (Knowsley = 15.4%; Liverpool = 26.2%; Sefton = 23.2%; St Helens = 26.1%; Wirral = 27.5%).

## Recommendations

- The drug testing process is the main criminal justice route whereby drug using offenders are identified and assessed for treatment. Local police drug testing data are not available through other reporting mechanisms; therefore this resource should be utilised by the police, drug treatment agencies and local commissioners regularly.
- All partners in the DIP process should utilise available data which allow to look at trends over time; for example, total attempted drug tests and positive drug test rates. This information will enable stakeholders to observe any changes and/or trends within their local area and across Merseyside, as well as investigating the reasons for these trends. This should then help to evidence any process changes

that may be needed, in addition to highlighting potential gaps or barriers which may affect these clients from engaging with treatment services.

- The number of attempted drug tests has decreased and the positive drug test rate has increased, which is likely due to the implementation of targeted testing. Targeted testing aimed to reduce the number of negative tests; therefore as this profile shows, it has been successful with what it set out to achieve. However, we need to ensure drug using offenders continue to be tested and are not being missed through the targeted testing method, as feedback from some drug treatment agencies suggest. Similarly, where re-presentation has reduced in Merseyside, care should be taken with figures as this is likely due to the reduction in the number of those being tested.
- The police drug testing dataset enables client profiling; including drug use, offending behaviour, gender, age, ethnicity and residency. This information is key to knowing likely presenters through drug testing and DIP and can impact on the resources and services required to cater for the needs of these individuals in an efficient manner in the custody suite, drug treatment service and/or local community. With resources and budgets constantly under scrutiny, it is vital that this information is used to ensure these individuals have a successful drug treatment experience. Furthermore, the dataset needs to be monitored in order to identify any changes in client profiling; for example, a previous drug testing report identified those aged between 18 and 24 years more likely to be arrested and drug tested (Collins et al., 2015), though in 2015/16 there were higher proportions among arrestees aged between 25 and 44 years.
- It is imperative that there are effective and prompt communication channels between the police in the custody suites, the local drug treatment agency and all other relevant drug treatment agencies across Merseyside. Although organisational operations may differ considerably, an overarching aim of assisting

drug using offenders towards treatment should be shared by all involved with DIP and facilitated as much as possible. High levels of communication are particularly relevant when dealing with Knowsley residents, who do not have a local custody suite. Regular feedback of any issues arising need to be encouraged and addressed, as well as adequate training where and when required.

These recommendations are unlikely to be achieved without sustained working between all stakeholders; however their implementation would likely ensure drug using offenders are being referred to treatment services appropriately and have a successful and positive drug treatment experience.

## References

Collins, P. et al. (2015). *Merseyside Annual DIP Report: Drug Testing (2014/15)* [online]. Available at: <http://www.cph.org.uk/publication/merseyside-annual-dip-report-drug-testing-april-2014-march-2015/> [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2016].

Home Office (2010). *Operational Process Guidance for Implementation of Testing on Arrest, Required Assessment and Restriction on Bail* [online]. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97792/DTOA-Guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97792/DTOA-Guidance.pdf) [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2016].

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