

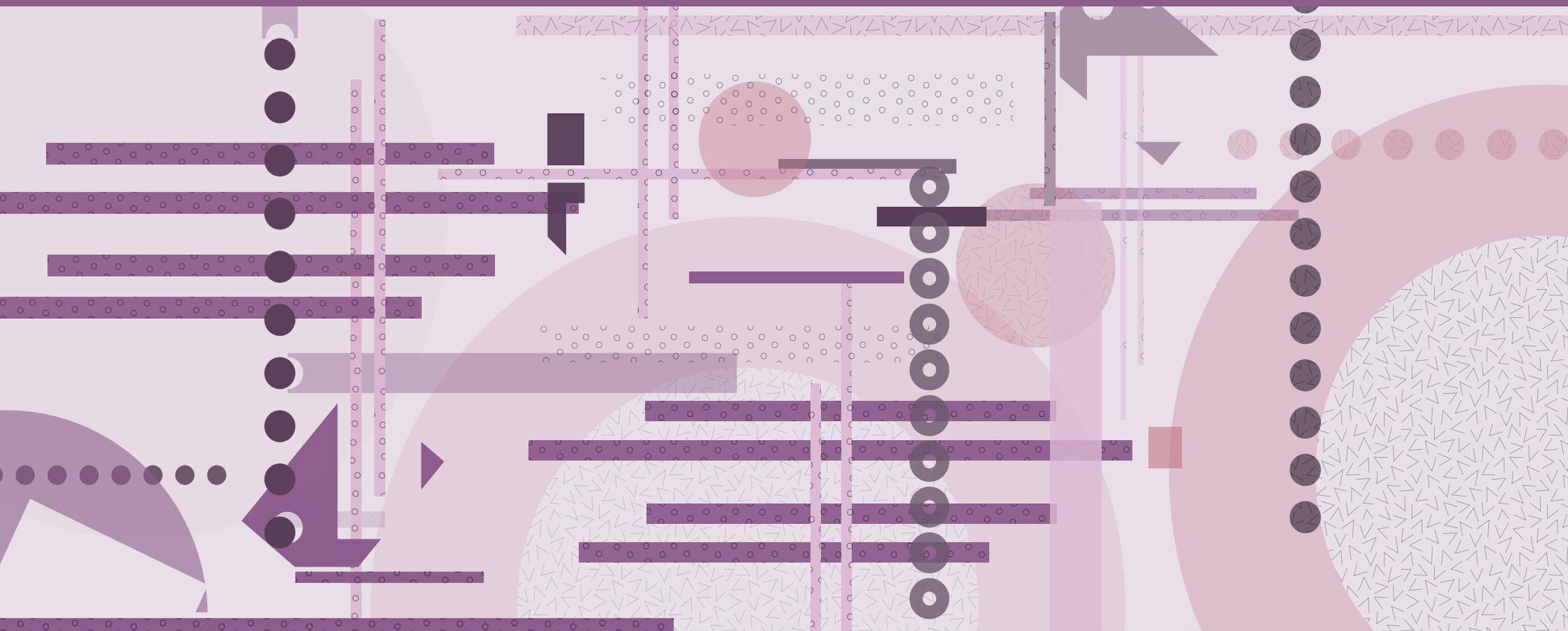
Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme



St Helens Drug Testing Profile (2013/14 to 2015/16)

October 2016

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Key findings

- Of the 27,138 attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2013 and March 2016, 16% were conducted at St Helens custody suite (n=4,398).
- The number of attempted drug tests in St Helens reduced by 44% over the three-year period.
- The positive drug test rate increased year on year. In 2015/16, the rate was 60% which is the same as the figure for tests across Merseyside overall (60%).
- Just under three in five (58%) positive tests were for some form of opiate metabolites (42% for both cocaine and opiates; 9% for opiates only), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (42%).
- Theft accounted for almost half (47%) of offences recorded at the time of the drug test, followed by just over one-quarter (26%) Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences.
- The majority (82%) of arrestees in St Helens were male.
- Those aged between 35 and 39 years accounted for the largest proportion of positive tests (20%), followed by arrestees aged between 25 and 29 years (17%), and between 30 and 34 years and between 40 and 44 years (16% each).
- The majority (98%) were White European.
- Over half (55%) were resident in St Helens, followed by 18% resident in Knowsley and 17% resident in Liverpool.
- There were 132 arrestees who tested positive in St Helens 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 26.1% of the total individuals testing positive in 2015/16, the second highest proportion of re-presentation seen in any of the ten cohorts documented in this profile.

Introduction

In St Helens, 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 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 St Helens 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 St Helens

There is one custody suite in operation in St Helens. The suite was closed as part of a pilot scheme between July and early September 2014. During this time individuals were drug tested at other custody suites across Merseyside.

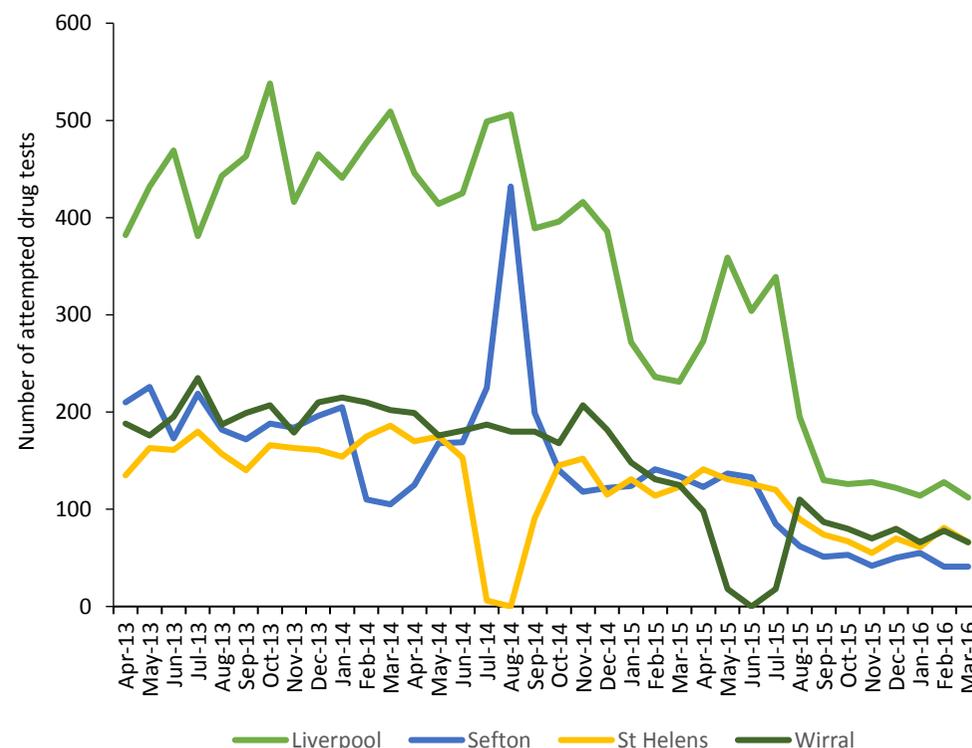
Between April 2013 and March 2016, there were a total of 27,138 attempted drug tests in Merseyside, of which 16% were conducted at St Helens custody suite (n=4,398; Table 1). The number of attempted drug tests in St Helens reduced by 44% between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The largest reduction in tests was seen between 2013/14 and 2014/15 (29%), while they reduced by 21% between 2014/15 and 2015/16. Conversely, drug tests conducted in other Merseyside areas saw the largest reduction between 2014/15 and 2015/16, which is likely as a result of the implementation of targeted testing. However, as St Helens custody suite was closed for part of 2014, this could be affecting the figures.

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 | 1,261 |
| Copy Lane | 1,853 | 2,080 | 859 | 4,792 |
| St Anne's Street | 3,747 | 2,781 | 1,831 | 8,359 |
| Southport | 317 | 17 | 14 | 348 |
| St Helens | 1,941 | 1,375 | 1,082 | 4,398 |
| Wavertree | 627 | 1,641 | 474 | 2,742 |
| Wirral | 2,403 | 2,064 | 771 | 5,238 |
| Total | 11,930 | 10,152 | 5,056 | 27,138 |

Figure 1 compares the number of attempted drug tests in St Helens with Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral (there are no custody suites in Knowsley). Although only slight, the reduction in the number of tests in St Helens dropped around July and August 2015 when targeted testing was introduced in its suite. The lowest numbers overall were recorded in July 2014 (n=6) and August 2014 (n=0), which is due to the closure of St Helens custody suite at this time. As a result, the number of tests increased in Sefton, and in Liverpool to a lesser extent. Excluding when the suite was closed, the number of attempted tests was lowest in November 2015 (n=55).

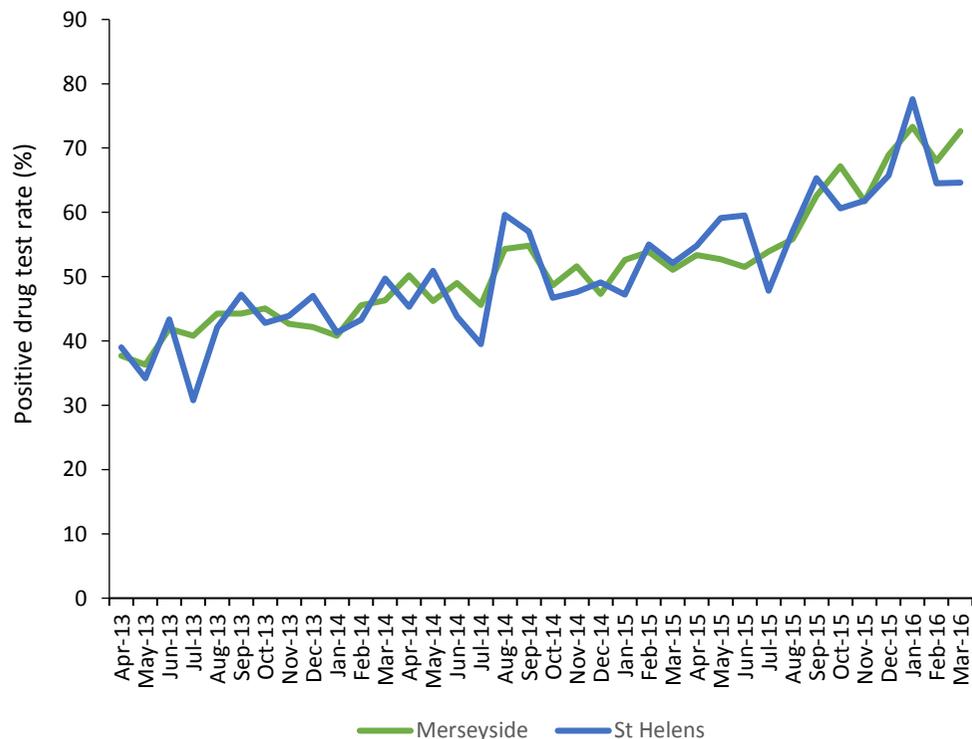
Figure 1: Number of attempted drug tests by area and month/year (2013/14-2015/16)



The positive drug test rate (the number of individuals testing positive ÷ the number of individuals successfully tested) for those tested in St Helens increased year on year,

particularly following the implementation of targeted testing in its custody suite in July 2015 (Figure 2). St Helen’s figures follow similar patterns to the figures for Merseyside overall.

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

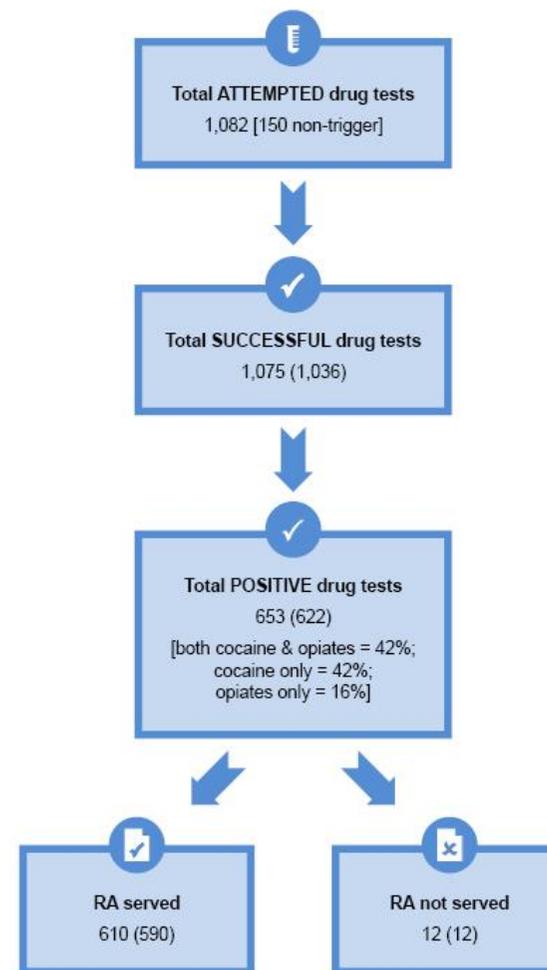


Drug testing activity in St Helens

Figure 3 shows the drug testing activity for those arrested and drug tested in St Helens between April 2015 and March 2016. Of the 1,036 individuals successfully tested in 2015/16, 622 individuals tested positive; this equates to a positive drug test rate of 60%, which is equal to those arrested and tested across Merseyside (60%).

Just under three in five (58%) positive tests were for some form of opiate metabolites (42% for both cocaine and opiates; 9% for opiates only), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (42%). These figures were representative of those for positive tests conducted across all custody suites in Merseyside.

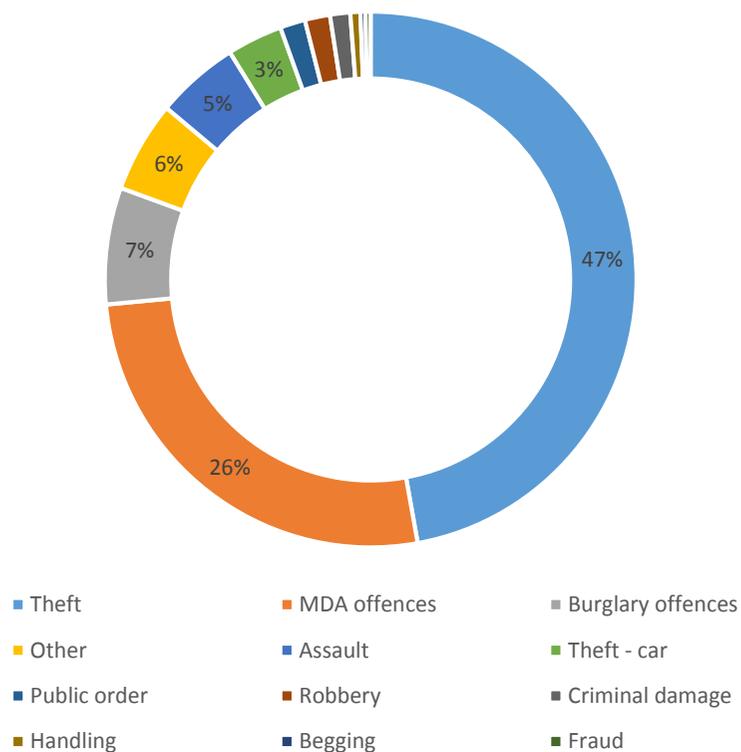
Figure 3: Drug testing activity in St Helens (2015/16)^



[^] 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 (47%) of offences reported by St Helens custody suite for those testing positive between April 2015 and March 2016, followed by just over one-quarter (26%) 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 St Helens by offence recorded at time of test (2015/16)



Demographics

Table 2 presents the age group and gender of those testing positive in St Helens custody suite in 2015/16. The majority (82%) were male, similar to the overall Merseyside figure (83%). Arrestees in St Helens aged between 35 and 39 years accounted for 20% of positive tests in 2015/16, followed by those aged between 25 and 29 years (17%), and between 30 and 34 years and between 40 and 44 years (16% each), similar to figures for all positive tests across Merseyside.

Table 2: Positive drug tests in St Helens by age group and gender (2015/16)^

| Age group | Females | | Males | | Total | Total |
|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 18-24 | <10 | 8% | <95 | 17% | 101 | 15% |
| 25-29 | 16 | 14% | 92 | 17% | 108 | 17% |
| 30-34 | 23 | 20% | 81 | 15% | 104 | 16% |
| 35-39 | 35 | 30% | 93 | 17% | 128 | 20% |
| 40-44 | 12 | 10% | 93 | 17% | 105 | 16% |
| 45-49 | 16 | 14% | 44 | 8% | 60 | 9% |
| 50+ | *** | 3% | <45 | 8% | 47 | 7% |
| Total | 115 | 100% | 538 | 100% | 653 | 100% |

^ Numbers less than five have been suppressed to maintain patient confidentiality.

The majority (98%) of those arrested and testing positive in St Helens between April 2015 and March 2016 were White European.

Where recorded, just over half (55%) of those tested in St Helens were resident in St Helens, followed by 18% resident in Knowsley and 17% resident in Liverpool.

Re-presentation

Table 3 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentation of clients through the drug testing process and shows the number of times clients who tested positive in St Helens custody suite within a 12-month period re-presented across Merseyside for a successful drug test.

There were 132 arrestees who tested positive in St Helens 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 26.1% of the total individuals testing positive in 2015/16, the second highest proportion of re-presentation seen in any of the ten cohorts documented in Table 3. The rate of re-presentation in the April 2015 to March 2016 cohort is somewhat higher than the overall Merseyside re-presentation rate (20.4%).

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

| Number of arrest occasions | Jul 14 - Jun15 (n=508) | Aug 14 - Jul 15 (n=547) | Sept 14 - Aug 15 (n=585) | Oct 14 - Sep 15 (n=582) | Nov 14 - Oct 15 (n=566) | Dec 14 - Nov 15 (n=548) | Jan 15 - Dec 15 (n=536) | Feb 15 - Jan 16 (n=532) | Mar 15 - Feb 16 (n=521) | Apr 15 - Mar 16 (n=506) |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| One | 381 (75.0%) | 403 (73.7%) | 434 (74.2%) | 431 (74.1%) | 420 (74.2%) | 416 (75.9%) | 402 (75.0%) | 400 (75.2%) | 391 (75.0%) | 374 (73.9%) |
| Two | 68 (13.4%) | 79 (14.4%) | 82 (14.0%) | 79 (13.6%) | 82 (14.5%) | 74 (13.5%) | 71 (13.2%) | 71 (13.3%) | 70 (13.4%) | 75 (14.8%) |
| Three | 38 (7.5%) | 36 (6.6%) | 37 (6.3%) | 39 (6.7%) | 31 (5.5%) | 27 (4.9%) | 32 (6.0%) | 29 (5.5%) | 28 (5.4%) | 26 (5.1%) |
| Four | 11 (2.2%) | 14 (2.6%) | 14 (2.4%) | 11 (1.9%) | 11 (1.9%) | 13 (2.4%) | 12 (2.2%) | 15 (2.8%) | 11 (2.1%) | 13 (2.6%) |
| Five | 5 (1.0%) | 9 (1.6%) | 10 (1.7%) | 12 (2.1%) | 10 (1.8%) | 6 (1.1%) | 10 (1.9%) | 7 (1.3%) | 11 (2.1%) | 9 (1.8%) |
| Six | | | 1 (0.2%) | 3 (0.5%) | 5 (0.9%) | 7 (1.3%) | 4 (0.7%) | 7 (1.3%) | 6 (1.2%) | 5 (1.0%) |
| Seven | 4 (0.8%) | 5 (0.9%) | 4 (0.7%) | 4 (0.7%) | 4 (0.7%) | 2 (0.4%) | 2 (0.4%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.4%) | 1 (0.2%) |
| Eight | | | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.4%) | 2 (0.4%) | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.4%) |
| Nine | | | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | | | |
| Ten | 1 (0.2%) | | | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | | |
| Eleven | | | | | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | |
| Thirteen | | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | | | | |
| Fifteen | | | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | | 1 (0.2%) |
| Sixteen | | | | | 1 (0.2%) | | | | | |
| Seventeen | | | | | | 1 (0.2%) | | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | |
| Nineteen | | | | | | | 1 (0.2%) | | | |
| Clients presenting more than once (%) | 25.0% | 26.3% | 25.8% | 25.9% | 25.8% | 24.0% | 25.0% | 24.8% | 25.0% | 26.1% |

Summary

- Across Merseyside, the number of attempted drug tests has decreased, particularly between 2014/15 and 2015/16, which is likely as a result of targeted testing. Although the number of tests has also decreased in St Helens, it was to a lesser extent when compared to Merseyside overall, which is likely due to St Helens custody suite being closed for part of 2014 and therefore affecting figures.
- The positive drug test rate has increased year on year in St Helens and across Merseyside overall, particularly following the implementation of targeted testing.
- In St Helens and across Merseyside overall, slightly more tested positive for opiate metabolites than cocaine only.
- In St Helens 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 testing positive 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. St Helens had a slightly higher proportion of arrestees aged between 35 and 39 years, and just over half were residents of St Helens and just under one-fifth each were residents of Knowsley and 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%). In St Helens, the individuals testing positive in 2015/16 was the second highest proportion of re-presentation seen in any of the cohorts.

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 (though it hasn't in St Helens), 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

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