

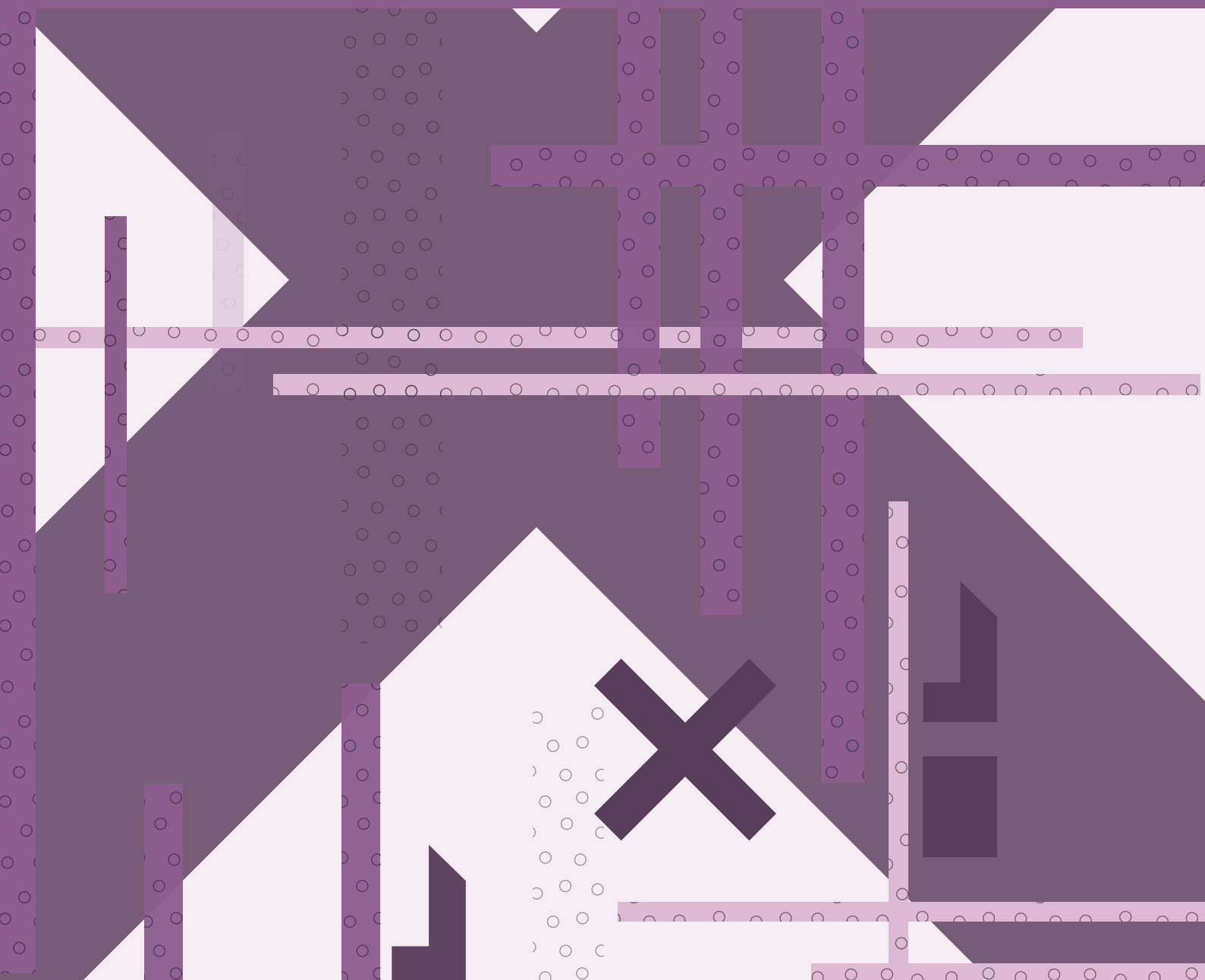
Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme



Knowsley Drug Testing Profile (2014 to 2017)

April 2018

Petra Collins, Karen Critchley, Mark Whitfield



Public Health Institute, Faculty of Education, Health and Community,
Liverpool John Moores University, Henry Cotton Campus,
15-21 Webster Street, Liverpool, L3 2ET

www.ljmu.ac.uk/phi

k.a.critchley@ljmu.ac.uk

0151 231 4290

twitter.com/PHI_IMS

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Institute
LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY



Key findings 2

Introduction 3

Drug tests for Knowsley residents 3

 Overview 3

 Drug testing activity 5

 Demographics 7

Summary 8

Recommendations 9

Appendices 11

 Appendix A 11

 Appendix B 12

References 13

Acknowledgements 13

KEY FINDINGS

- Between January 2014 and December 2017, 6% of the attempted drug tests carried out across Merseyside were Knowsley residents (n=1,371).
- Over one-third (37%) of Knowsley residents were drug tested in Liverpool (n=511), followed by 32% in St Helens (n=437), 27% in Sefton (n=373) and 4% in Wirral (n=50).
- The number of attempted drug tests carried out on Knowsley residents reduced by 46% between 2014 and 2015, and by 59% between 2015 and 2016. Overall, the number reduced by 78% over the four-year period, though numbers were similar in 2016 and 2017.
- The average positive drug test rate in 2016 and 2017 was 72% and 74% respectively, compared to 50% and 53% in 2014 and 2015 respectively.
- There were 111 positive drug tests in 2017 (104 individuals).
- Just under three-fifths (57%) of positive tests were for cocaine only (n=63), while 43% were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 42 [38%]; opiates only = 6 [5%]).
- Over one-third (36%) of positive drug test records in 2017 were Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=40), followed by 26% which were theft (n=29).
- The majority of Knowsley residents were male (n=96; 86%)
- Around one-fifth (19%) were aged between 18 and 24 years (n=21), followed by those aged 25-29 years (n=18; 16%), and those aged 45-49 years and 50 years and over each accounted for 15% (n=17 each).
- The majority were White European (n=108; 97%).

INTRODUCTION

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) process generally begins with the police drug testing individuals in the custody suite following an arrest. If offenders test positive for Class A drugs (opiates and/or cocaine), they are served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police. This is a compulsory legal sanction which requires 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 use and offending behaviour and, if necessary, encourage them to engage with drug treatment services (Home Office, 2010). In 2016/17, 57% of those accessing DIP in Merseyside presented via the RA route, while in Knowsley 32% presented through RAs (Collins et al., 2017). For this reason, the police play an important role in the early stages of the DIP process.

Merseyside Police introduced targeted drug testing in 2015. This involves a set list of questions around drug use that should be considered by the police 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, thus save police time and money, while ensuring offenders who use drugs continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process.

This Drug Testing Profile for Knowsley presents information on drug tests carried out on Knowsley residents across the Merseyside area between January 2014 and December 2017, with a particular focus given to the most recent year (2017). This profile contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing data by providing numbers and trends of offenders who use drugs identified through this route into the DIP system and a demographic overview of the individuals. Comparisons to overall Merseyside figures have been made, where possible, with tables in Appendix A and B showing comparisons across each area (custody suite area and area of residence). This profile also provides recommendations for all stakeholders involved with DIP, in terms of the efficient use of resources and effective services locally and across Merseyside.

DRUG TESTS FOR KNOWSLEY RESIDENTS

OVERVIEW

Between January 2014 and December 2017, there were a total of 22,808 attempted drug tests in Merseyside's custody suites. The number of drug tests decreased year on year, particularly between 2014 and 2015 (44% decrease) and between 2015 and 2016 (50% decrease), which is likely attributed to the implementation of targeted testing across Merseyside in 2015. Notably, the number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside reduced overall by around three-quarters (74%) within the four-year period.

There is no custody suite in Knowsley; Knowsley residents arrested as per the above-mentioned guidelines are drug tested at the custody suites across Merseyside. When individuals test positive for Class A drugs they should be transferred to Knowsley Integrated Recovery Service as part of the RA and continuity of care process which underpins DIP.

Of the attempted drug tests across Merseyside between January 2014 and December 2017, 6% were carried out on Knowsley residents (n=1,371). It should be noted that 18% of records across the four-year period did not have a Drug (and Alcohol) Action Team (D[A]AT) of residence recorded and therefore figures do not represent a true reflection of Knowsley residents arrested and drug tested across Merseyside.

Table 1 shows that the largest proportion of Knowsley residents were tested in Liverpool (n=511; 37%), followed by St Helens (n=437; 32%), Sefton (n=373; 27%) and Wirral (n=50; 4%), over the four-year period. Overall, the number of Knowsley residents

drug tested across Merseyside reduced by 78%, with the largest reduction between 2015 and 2016 (59% decrease), followed by a 46% decrease between 2014 and 2015, while the number of drug tests in 2016 and 2017 were similar¹ (n=153 and 154 respectively).

Table 1: Number of attempted drug tests for Knowsley residents by area and year (2014-17)

Area	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Liverpool	316	78	54	63	511
Sefton	199	91	37	46	373
St Helens	157	195	54	31	437
Wirral	19	9	8	14	50
Total	691	373	153	154	1,371

Figure 1 shows the number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside for Knowsley residents by month and year, clearly demonstrating the reduction in the number of tests between 2014 and 2016. There was a substantial drop in numbers in August 2015, when targeted testing was fully implemented across Merseyside’s custody suites. The lowest number of attempted tests for Knowsley residents was in January 2017 (n=5), while tests were highest in February 2014 and March 2014 (n=68 each).

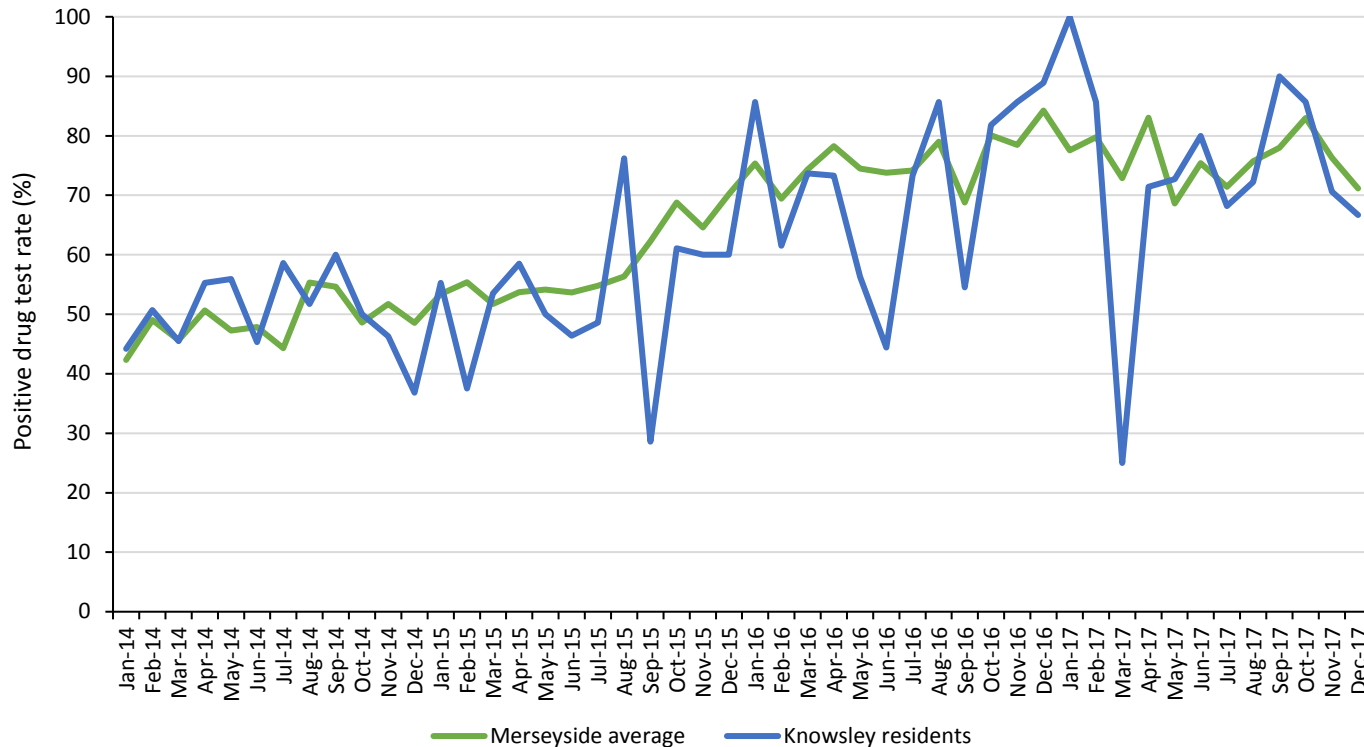
Figure 1: Number of attempted drug tests for Knowsley residents by month/year (2014-17)



¹ Notably, the recording of D(A)AT of residence increased in 2017. Records missing D(A)AT of residence: 2014=17%; 2015=21%; 2016=25%; 2017=11%.

The positive drug test rate² for Knowsley residents tested across Merseyside increased year on year between 2014 and 2016, though it was similar in 2016 and 2017 (Figure 2). The average positive drug test rate in 2016 and 2017 was 72% and 74% respectively, compared to 50% and 53% in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Furthermore, there were many fluctuations during the four-year period; rates were lowest in March 2017 (25%) and September 2015 (29%), while rates were highest in January 2017 (100%) and September 2017 (90%).

Figure 2: Positive drug test rate by month/year (2014-17)



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

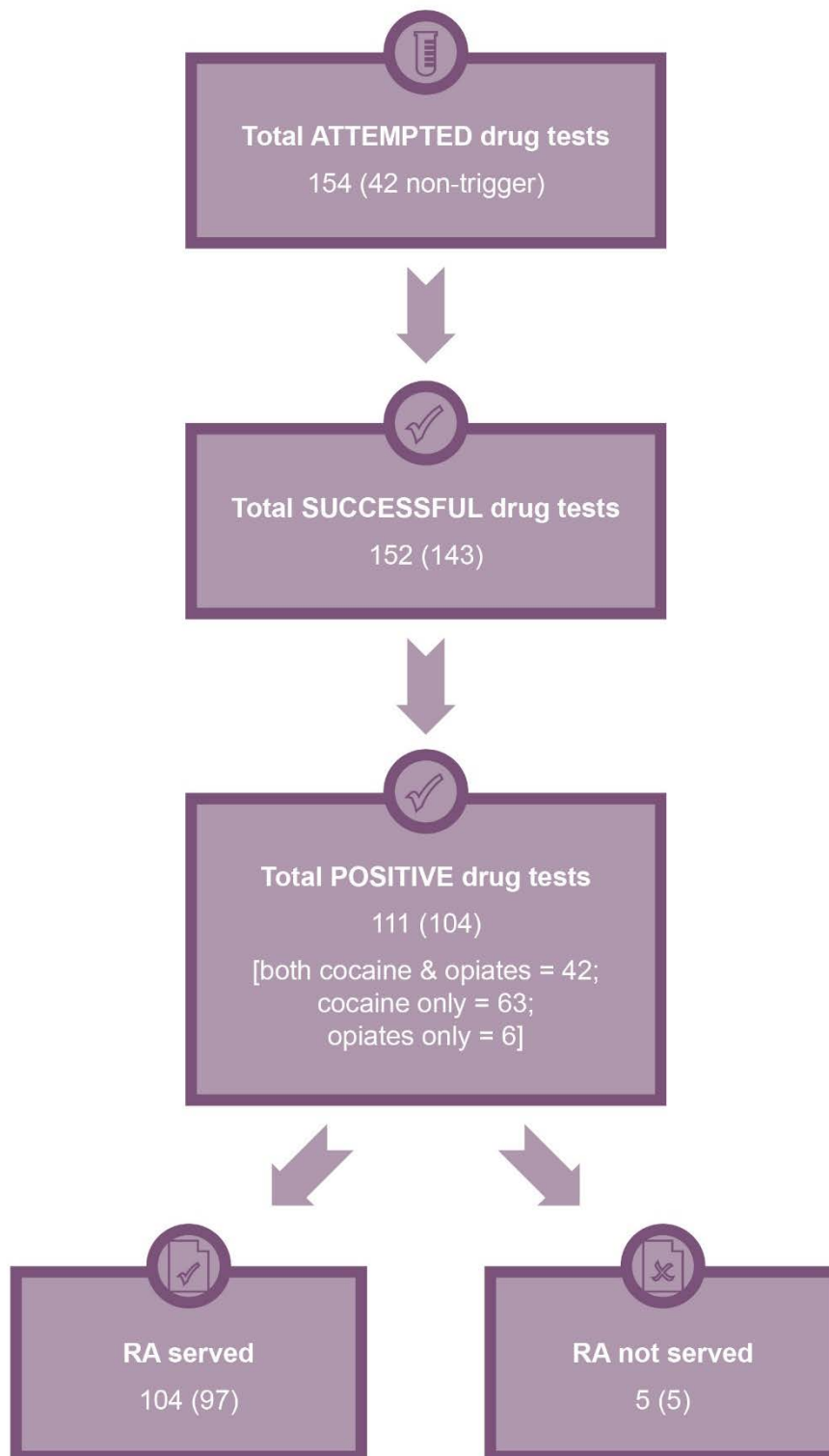
Figure 3 shows the drug testing activity for Knowsley residents arrested and drug tested across Merseyside between January and December 2017³. There were a total of 154 attempted drug tests in 2017; of which 152 were successful (143 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 104 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 73% in 2017, which is similar to the average positive drug test rate for Merseyside (74%).

Just under three-fifths (57%) of the 111 positive tests were for cocaine only (n=63), while 43% were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 42 [38%]; opiates only = 6 [5%]). The proportion of Knowsley residents who tested positive for cocaine only was somewhat higher than Merseyside overall (47%).

² Positive drug test rate = (number of individuals testing positive ÷ number of individuals successfully tested) x 100.

³ In 2017, 11% of all positive drug tests did not have a D(A)AT of residence recorded.

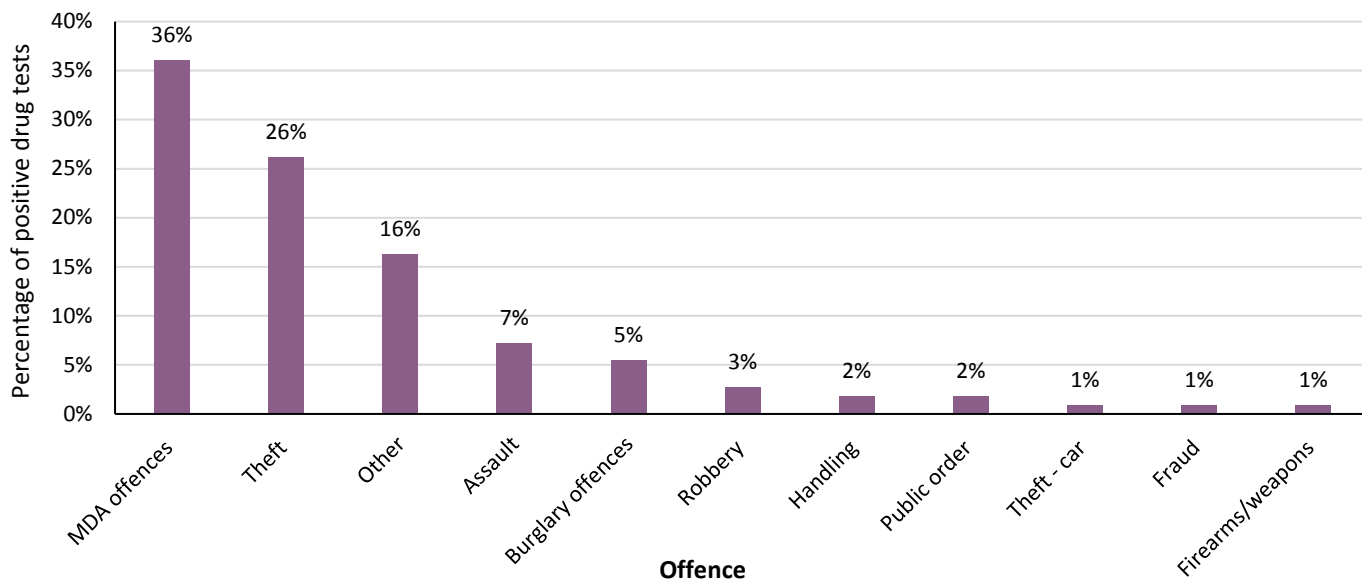
Figure 3: Drug testing activity for Knowsley residents (2017)⁴



⁴ Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets. 'Total attempted drug tests' is a summation of successful tests and those that were refused or aborted. 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those testing positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA. Records where tests were disputed and overturned have been removed; therefore the figure may be different to the subtraction of 'RA not served' from 'Total positive tests'.

Police drug testing data capture the offence that led to the arrest and subsequent drug test. Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences accounted for the largest proportion (n=40; 36%) of positive drug test records, followed by theft (n=29; 26%; Figure 4). In comparison, data for all positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2017 reported a lower proportion of MDA offences (31%) and a higher proportion of theft (38%).

Figure 4: Positive drug tests for Knowsley residents by offence (2017)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Males accounted for 86% of positive drug tests carried out on Knowsley residents in 2017 (n=96), which is higher than the proportion for Merseyside overall (83%).

Figure 5 shows Knowsley residents aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion of those testing positive in 2017 (n=21; 19%), followed by those aged 25-29 years (n=18; 16%), and those aged 45-49 years and 50 years and over each accounted for 15% (n=17 each). Proportions for these age groups (with the exception of 25-29 years) are higher than those recorded across Merseyside.

Figure 5: Positive drug tests for Knowsley residents by age group (2017)

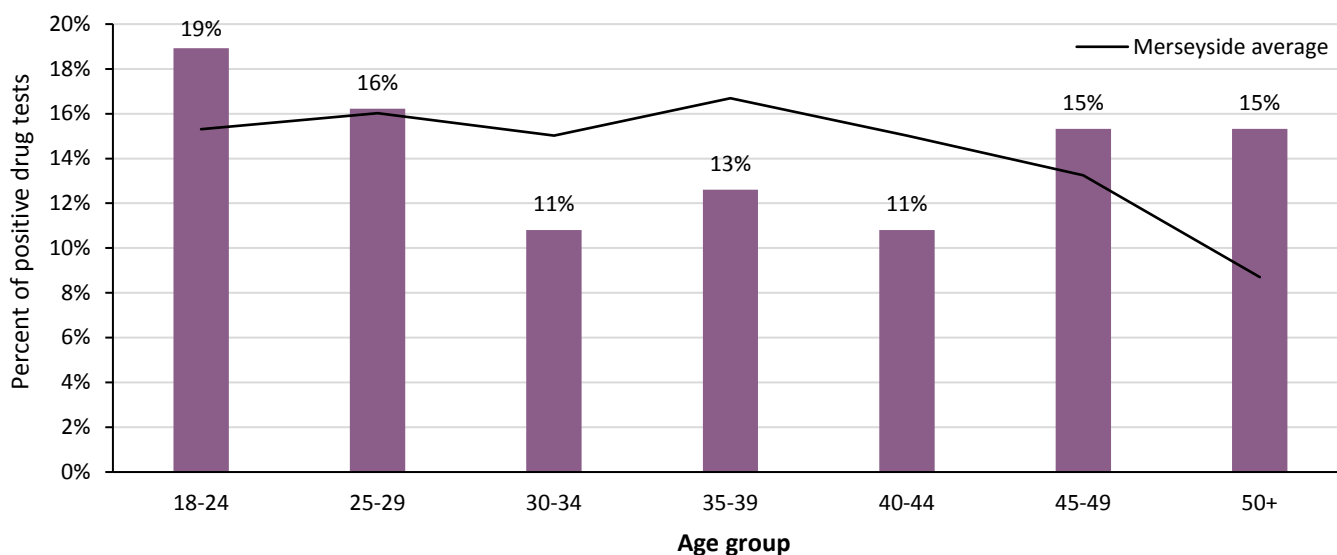


Table 2 shows some differences in age group proportions across gender for Knowsley residents. Although there were smaller numbers of females, there were larger proportions aged 40-44 years and 50 years and over (20% and 27% respectively) when compared to males (9% and 14% respectively).

Table 2: Positive drug tests for Knowsley residents by age group and gender (2017)⁵

Age group	Females		Males		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
18-24	***	7%	<25	21%	21	19%
25-29	***	13%	<20	17%	18	16%
30-34	***	7%	<15	11%	12	11%
35-39	***	13%	<15	13%	14	13%
40-44	***	20%	<10	9%	12	11%
45-49	***	13%	<20	16%	17	15%
50+	***	27%	<15	14%	17	15%
Total	15	100%	96	100%	111	100%

The majority of Knowsley residents arrested who tested positive in 2017 were White European (n=108; 97%), similar to the proportion across Merseyside overall (96%).

SUMMARY

- Between 2014 and 2017, attempted drug tests across Merseyside reduced by 74%, while they reduced by 78% for Knowsley residents.
- Over half (53%) of positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2017 were for opiate metabolites, compared to 42% for Knowsley residents.
- Just under two in five (38%) positive tests across Merseyside in 2017 reported theft offences, while it was somewhat lower for Knowsley residents (26%), with MDA offences accounting for the largest proportion (36%).
- Across Merseyside, the majority (83%) were male, though a slightly larger proportion was reported for Knowsley residents (86%).
- Knowsley residents aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion of positive tests (19%), while there were just 15% for this age group across Merseyside.

⁵ Throughout this report numbers less than five have been suppressed (with ***) to maintain confidentiality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The drug testing process is the main criminal justice route whereby offenders who use drugs 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 all stakeholders regularly. All partners in the DIP process should utilise available data which 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 investigate the reasons for these trends. This should assist in evidencing any process changes that may be needed, in addition to highlighting potential gaps or barriers that may prevent these clients from engaging with treatment services.
- The number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside has decreased substantially (74% decrease between 2014 and 2017), which is likely due to the implementation of targeted testing. Targeted testing aimed to reduce the number of negative tests, and as this profile shows, the positive drug test rate has increased since its implementation. However, research suggests individuals who would be appropriate for treatment are not being drug tested under targeted testing. Collins et al. (2017b) found more than half of a cohort of individuals who tested positive for Class A drugs and continued to offend, were not drug tested at subsequent arrests. Therefore stakeholders should consider ways to increase drug testing and identify offenders for DIP intervention.
- The recording of the arrestee's D(A)AT of residence is valuable for treatment agencies in identifying individuals tested across Merseyside, and is even more critical in areas where there is no custody suite. Between 2014 and 2017, 18% of attempted drug tests were missing the D(A)AT of residence; however the completion of this data item has improved substantially since July 2017 (on average, completion of D[A]AT since July 2017 has been 100%). Merseyside Police should continue to ensure this information is recorded to enable more accurate analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the residents across the five Merseyside areas.
- The police drug testing dataset enables client profiling, including Class A drug use, offending, gender, age, ethnicity and residency. This information is key in identifying 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, this information should be used to ensure these individuals have a successful drug treatment experience. Furthermore, the dataset should be monitored in order to identify any changes in client profiling. For example, a previous drug testing report identified those aged 25-29 years accounted for the largest proportion of Knowsley residents testing positive in 2015/16 (Critchley and Whitfield, 2016), while this profile for 2017 shows the largest proportion for Knowsley residents were aged 18-24 years.
- It is imperative that there are effective and prompt communication channels between the police in the custody suites, the local treatment agency and all other relevant treatment agencies across Merseyside. Although organisational operations may differ considerably, an overarching aim of assisting offenders who use drugs towards treatment should be shared by all involved with DIP and facilitated as much as possible, with a clear understanding of the RA process. High levels of communication are particularly relevant when out of hours and when dealing with residents of Knowsley and St Helens, who currently do not have a local custody suite. Regular feedback of any issues arising should 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 offenders who use drugs are referred to treatment services appropriately and have a successful and positive drug treatment experience.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Overview of figures by custody suite area (2017)⁶

	Liverpool	Sefton	St Helens	Wirral	Merseyside
Overview					
Attempted tests (n)	1,266	423	316	792	2,797
Successful tests (n & %⁷)	1,254 (99%)	420 (99%)	315 (100%)	781 (99%)	2,770 (99%)
Positive tests (n & %⁸)	913 (73%)	334 (80%)	223 (71%)	621 (80%)	2,091 (75%)
Test results (%)					
Negative	27%	20%	29%	20%	25%
Positive	73%	80%	71%	80%	75%
Cocaine only	53%	48%	47%	40%	47%
Opiates only	5%	9%	7%	7%	6%
Both (cocaine & opiates)	42%	43%	47%	53%	46%
Midweek vs. weekend (%)					
Midweek	67%	69%	71%	69%	69%
Weekend	33%	31%	29%	31%	31%
% of tests carried out when staffed with drugs worker	81% midweek; 49% weekend	49%	40%	48% midweek; 31% weekend	n/a
Offence (%)					
MDA offences	35%	33%	27%	26%	31%
Theft	32%	35%	40%	46%	38%
Gender (%)					
Females	17%	21%	12%	17%	17%
Males	83%	79%	88%	83%	83%
Age group (%)					
18-24	17%	14%	19%	13%	15%
25-29	17%	17%	16%	15%	16%
30-34	15%	15%	18%	14%	15%
35-39	16%	17%	18%	17%	17%
40-44	15%	14%	12%	16%	15%
45-49	13%	14%	11%	15%	13%
50+	8%	9%	6%	11%	9%
Ethnicity (%)					
White European	95%	98%	99%	97%	96%
Area of residence (%)					
Knowsley	6%	12%	12%	2%	6%
Liverpool	76%	21%	19%	31%	47%
Sefton	5%	35%	5%	8%	11%
St Helens	2%	25%	59%	0%	11%
Wirral	5%	1%	1%	55%	20%
Outside of Merseyside	6%	8%	4%	4%	6%

⁶ All figures are for January to December 2017 only, although St Helens custody suite closed mid-August 2017. Excluding 'Overview' and 'Test results', figures are for positive tests only.

⁷ Per cent of attempted tests.

⁸ Per cent of successful tests. This is different to the positive drug rate reported in the profile, which looks at individuals only.

Overview of figures by area of residence (2017)⁹

	Knowsley	Liverpool	Sefton	St Helens	Wirral	Merseyside ¹⁰
Overview						
Attempted tests (n)	154	1,187	257	266	476	2,797
Successful tests (n & % ¹¹)	152 (99%)	1,172 (99%)	255 (99%)	264 (99%)	472 (99%)	2,770 (99%)
Positive tests (n & % ¹²)	111 (73%)	879 (75%)	207 (81%)	200 (76%)	367 (78%)	2,091 (75%)
Test results (%)						
Negative	27%	25%	19%	24%	22%	25%
Positive	73%	75%	81%	76%	78%	75%
<i>Cocaine only</i>	57%	47%	51%	41%	38%	47%
<i>Opiates only</i>	5%	6%	6%	9%	7%	6%
<i>Both (cocaine & opiates)</i>	38%	46%	43%	51%	55%	46%
Offence (%)						
MDA offences	36%	33%	30%	28%	24%	31%
Theft	26%	36%	34%	43%	49%	38%
Gender (%)						
Females	14%	18%	19%	17%	17%	17%
Males	86%	82%	81%	83%	83%	83%
Age group (%)						
18-24	19%	12%	14%	23%	14%	15%
25-29	16%	16%	16%	18%	14%	16%
30-34	11%	16%	20%	14%	11%	15%
35-39	13%	18%	20%	13%	19%	17%
40-44	11%	17%	10%	15%	13%	15%
45-49	15%	13%	12%	13%	16%	13%
50+	15%	8%	9%	6%	13%	9%
Ethnicity (%)						
White European	97%	96%	98%	99%	98%	96%

⁹ All figures are for January to December 2017 only, although St Helens custody suite closed mid-August 2017. Excluding 'Overview' and 'Test results', figures are for positive tests only.

¹⁰ Merseyside figures are for drug tests across Merseyside, not Merseyside residents i.e. figures include drug tests for those resident outside of Merseyside.

¹¹ Per cent of attempted tests.

¹² Per cent of successful tests. This is different to the positive drug rate reported in the profile, which looks at individuals only.

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