

IOM – Notes

Non Statutory Scheme

This element of the IOM started in March 2012. The team work with a group of offenders not subject to any statutory court orders or licenses, but whom, nonetheless commit high levels of crime in the city's communities.

Offenders are identified using set criteria with a number of thresholds; the majority of those identified have a drug and/or alcohol dependency leading them to commit high levels of acquisitive crime such as burglary and shoplifting.

From March to September 2012, the team worked with 24 offenders, results so far have been very positive, as demonstrated below:-

Arrests and convictions for group for 6 months prior to and during engagement				
Prior Arrests	Prior Convictions		Arrests During	Convictions During
121	117		22	15
Breakdown of time on scheme against arrests/convictions				
9 Clients - 5 months or more				
Prior Arrests	Convictions		Arrests during engagement	Convictions
41	40		12	7
7 Clients - 2-4 months				
41	40		9	7
8 Clients - 0-1 month				
39	37		1	1

Work with offenders begins early, staff conduct several 'contacts' whilst the offender is in custody. This provides an understanding of the issues the offender will face when they leave custody and provides an opportunity to address some of those prior to release. The scheme is voluntary for non statutory offenders, many of whom are suspicious of the Police and authority, therefore engagement and building a relationship of trust is a key factor in getting an offender to agree to be part of the scheme.

Persistent and Priority Offender (PPO) Scheme

The PPO Scheme is similar to the Non Statutory Scheme in terms of contacts, activities etc, however there is a requirement to engage and attend appointments, due to a court order in place. Clients on the scheme are some of the city's most difficult, challenging and chaotic residents. Outcomes and achievements for this category of offender can simply be a reduction in the level and seriousness of offending, rather than a complete abatement. It is

currently working with 11 clients and a further 29 are serving custodial sentences. If a client re-offends whilst on the scheme and is given a custodial sentence, staff maintain contact whilst the sentence is undertaken. This gives consistent support and builds trust.

The Panel queried whether the service operated a weekend service which would provide support to clients outside of normal working hours. This does not happen currently although a PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) will be working within the team shortly and may be available to work weekends. It felt this provision should be given further consideration by the IOM to strengthen the quality service already in place.

Triggers to Offending

- Accommodation

Echoing the evidence the Panel had already gathered from other sources, getting a client suitable, stable accommodation can often be the most vital and also the most difficult to achieve.

The vast majority of clients on the IOM scheme have 'burnt bridges' with family, friends and previous accommodation. In addition consideration has to be given as to where a client is housed, as previous peer and family associations can make re-offending more likely. Whilst the IOM does not refer to the hostels, such as Camrex House and the Norfolk Hotel, offenders with few options tend to gravitate to these places, which is of concern to those working with them.

The IOM has access to a worker from the homelessness charity Shelter for one day per fortnight, recently cut from one day per week due to reductions in funding available to the charity. Whilst the IOM does have good links with the Salvation Army, links with other registered housing providers are not currently present, although the Council's Gateway provides the necessary central point of contact.

The Panel learned that the IOM can and have worked with private landlords to inform them when a client is engaged in the scheme and would encourage the landlord to be actively involved in sharing information about a client's behaviour. Often, the level and intensity of support provided by the IOM encourages private landlords to accommodate clients and the IOM are also available to support providers as to the suitability of a client for a tenancy.

As the Panel had heard previously, the lack of supported accommodation for women in the city, as it is regionally, is a significant issue of concern. The IOM does have great difficulty finding suitable accommodation for its female clients. The team reported this often led to a failure to rehabilitate female offenders with drug or alcohol dependency. Women Outside Walls (WOW) project, provide an assertive outreach approach, retaining involvement as long as support is required, very often beyond statutory orders. This project

was seen to be making progress in working with female offenders to successfully house them.

Additional supported accommodation schemes would be very welcomed in Sunderland; however the Panel agreed that given the current and future budgetary reductions to the Council's budget other mechanisms to improving accommodation for offenders would prove more cost effective and realistic.

- Drug and Alcohol Dependency

In 2010, the current Government changed the focus on rehabilitation from prescribed substitutes, to an abstinence based model, whereby the user refrains from using any substance or drug substitute. Interestingly out of 52 PPO's in the statutory scheme, only eight do not have a drug/alcohol issue. Nationally, for PPO's this is around 70-80%.

DiSC, delivering the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) in Sunderland also have a worker based within the team. DiSC provides continuous support of a drug user from the point of arrest to sentencing and beyond. DiSC and the Turning Point Arrest Referral Team, who are located within Gilbridge Police Station to carry out 'test on arrest' drugs testing to ascertain whether there is a drug or alcohol issue, work closely to delivering this aspect of the DIP.

The team support this through a case management support role where the offender is being managed by a statutory agency such as Probation or the IOM.

Aftercare describes what happens after individuals are released from custodial sentences, complete community sentences (Statutory and Non Statutory) and/or leave treatment. Appropriate aftercare support greatly increases the likelihood that offenders will not relapse into drug misuse and re-offending. The DIP team provides assessment services within all of the local Prisons and offers gate/release pick ups. involves several important factors, such as housing, support with benefits, managing finances, employment, education and training opportunities, access to mental health services, rebuilding family relationships and so on. DiSC workers will provide, or broker the provision of, appropriate services in relation to each of these factors.

- Training and Employment

A key part of recovery is engagement in positive activities. Clients on the scheme receive a timetable which may include activities such as fishing or allotment based activities. All of the activities enable volunteering opportunities to provide experience and improve CVs.

It was noted that the activities offered may not appeal to female offenders and the Panel was informed that the lack of focus for women had been recognised by Probation which was now operating a 'one stop shop' for women every

week, in which women will be offered targeted courses, including a recently delivered 'I am Me' programme which 11 women completed over 11 sessions.

Employment is a critical issue for those clients in the scheme. Staff acknowledged that where employment was secured this dramatically increased the chances of a long term success story.

- Mental Health

The IOM has a dedicated mental health worker as drug and alcohol issues can mask underlying mental health problems. The term dual diagnosis is given to those who have a drug or alcohol dependency that also has a mental health issue. The mental health worker is currently developing relationships and links with local mental health services in an attempt to identify and address need. This was said to be a very innovative approach and in its very early stages.

The Panel queried what if anything was being done to address the specific needs of Veteran offenders in the city. It was confirmed that links were beginning to be made with various charities and organisations for veterans, and that Probation had recently started to record information around veterans. It was very early days but was viewed to be positive progress to be built upon.

Partnership working/Communication/Information Sharing

The Panel were pleased to note a strong ethic of partnership working, made easier and more seamless through co-location and a true multi-agency approach.

Several mechanisms are in place in which staff have the opportunity to share information and raise issues of concern, both with the team, and with other agencies. This included:

- (a) Monthly IOM Meeting – to discuss statutory and non statutory offenders engaged in the scheme;
- (b) Nominations Panel – reviews nominations for the scheme. These come from a variety of places including the Police Neighbourhood Teams and LMAPS (Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving) groups, of which Elected Members participate;
- (c) Cases for Concern – meeting involving a range of agencies looking at those individuals whereby ongoing or new developments may lead to an increased risk of harm or offending;

Links with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) are also strong, this is important as the majority of clients are young adults, and also in so far as there is strong evidence to suggest that young people do not manage the transition from Youth Offending Teams to Probation very well due to the very

different approaches taken. That being said, the current criterion for IOM is such there aren't many young offenders who are eligible for the scheme.

Turning Point, operating within Police Stations are able to identify those clients on the IOM scheme and flag this with colleagues immediately. Similarly, Counted 4 staff can highlight emerging issues for clients with probation workers, including failed drug tests or changes to the clients life or circumstances.

The team is linked to a Prison Officer within HMP specifically dedicated to working with potential and current IOM clients.

Other evidence taken by the Panel had revealed a difficulty in information sharing across agencies. It was reported that the IOM operate within the information sharing protocol signed up to by all of the agencies within the Safer Sunderland Partnership, and by and large information sharing in Sunderland is very good and positive.

Offenders with drug or alcohol problems are often significant users of Accident and Emergency and the 'drop in' centres across the city. The Panel raised the 'Yellow and Red Card' system operating in City Hospitals to deter unreasonable or violent behaviour and whether the IOM would be alerted if a client was subject to this. It was agreed that this would be looked at further through the 'Cases for Concern' meeting.

Offender experiences

The Panel met two of the clients on the IOM scheme to gain an insight into the experiences of the offender using this type of approach:

Colin

Colin is from Portsmouth originally. He is an ex-heroin user, in and out of prison for around seven years. He was subject to a DRR (Drugs Rehabilitation Requirement) order and requested to have his order transferred to Sunderland as his Father lives here and he felt he could make a fresh start.

He started the scheme in April 2012 and has been struck by the difference in approach by the IOM Team as oppose to the more traditional supervision approach at the IOM in Portsmouth, which involved a quick 'chat' and a signature. The IOM scheme in Sunderland is more intense and there is a lot more support available to him.

He is currently living at his Father's house, but has recently started to look for his own accommodation with the assistance of the IOM.

He has regular contact with staff from DISC, Turning Point, his Probation Officer and the GP, who assist him in staying 'clean', which he now has been for six months. He has also been taking part in a bike making skills course which has given him a level of normality and fills in his time (which previously had been spent offending to gain money for heroin).

It is early days, but he feels positive for the future and feels the move he made from his home town gave him the fresh start he needed and the IOM scheme has helped to keep him on the right track.

Paul

Paul was subject to a DRR order for offending caused by his drug use which had been going on for a long time. He has been engaged with the programme for 18 months.

He first got a criminal record at the age of 32, having previously worked and he said at that point he knew he was throwing his opportunities away.

He has had the opportunity to complete Further Education courses whilst on the programme and is now completing a mentoring course with the aim of employment. He is clinically depressed and said he looks forward to attending the courses every week.

He is currently living in the Hendon area in private rented accommodation, and whilst it isn't where he would choose to be longer term, he is happy for the present to have something secure.

The main thing the programme has give Paul is stability. His long term drug use had left him feeling 'out of the normal world'. The programme made things calmer for him and helped to address some of the issues he had. He said the support he has had has been 'second to none' and the next steps for him when he leaves the programme will be to engage with NECA (North East Council of Addictions) who will work with him in the community.

