

Substance Misuse and Community Safety in Staffordshire

August 2007

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Executive Summary

This report draws together the available data and provides analysis regarding substance misuse in Staffordshire County as it relates to issues of community safety. Both drugs and alcohol have been the subject of considerable attention in recent years. As well as the substantial economic and social costs it has on victims of crime and society more widely, substance misuse continues to command a high media profile.

Whilst there is evidence of a powerful link between drugs and alcohol and issues of community safety, the relationship between the two is complex and takes a number of forms. There is a strong link between drug misuse and acquisitive crime and a similarly strong link between alcohol misuse and violence and anti-social behaviour (including criminal damage). How drug misuse and alcohol misuse relate to community safety is addressed separately in this report.

Introduction

Drug misuse and community safety

Although use of illegal substances is an offence in itself, research shows that people who use drugs are more likely than others to commit other forms of law-breaking². Thus, drug related crime is a very significant part of volume crime generally.

The 2005/06 British Crime Survey estimates that around a third (35%) of 16 to 59 year olds (equating to over 11 million people) have used one or more illicit drugs in their lifetime, 10.5% used one or more in the last year, 6.3% in the last month³. Cannabis is the drug most likely to be used, followed by cocaine then ecstasy. Most of these individuals will take drugs occasionally, without becoming involved in other crime. However, around 5% of the sample are problematic drug users who cause harm to themselves and to others through their drug use. For this group of users, there are strong links between drug misuse and issues around community safety.

The regular use of illicit drugs places a huge economic burden on the user. In most cases this can not be met legitimately, causing heavy users to turn to drug dealing or acquisitive crime to fund their habit. The regular use of heroin or cocaine has been linked to income generating offences such as theft, burglary and robbery.

It is important to remember however, that crime and addiction do not go inevitably together. Not all drug users will be involved in crime. Also, even for the most chaotic dependent users, criminal activity often pre-dates drug abuse.

Nothing affects the well-being of local communities as much as substance misuse, related crime and the fear of such crime. Where communities are strong, drugs do not take hold. The highest incidences of drug-related crime, supply and drug related nuisance occur in the communities that suffer most from social deprivation.

Alcohol misuse and community safety

Alcohol-related crime and disorder has a major impact on the quality of life of many people, it also places huge pressures on criminal justice agencies and emergency services who are confronted daily with alcohol related crime. The severity of alcohol-related crime may vary considerably from relatively low level rowdy drunkenness and anti-social behaviour to serious violent assaults.

Although the link between alcohol and crime is well established, the exact nature and extent of the relationship is a matter of debate. Any behaviour committed in the context of alcohol consumption, results from the interaction between factors related to the individual, the environment and the alcohol. Alcohol is therefore best seen as contributing to crime, disorder and violence, not causing it.

Alcohol-related crime is most likely to be linked to violence, particularly 'stranger violence' (British Crime Survey 2005/06). Much of this violence occurs in the night time economy, in or around pubs and clubs. The impact of violence in the night time economy places huge pressures on enforcement and health services, with statistics suggesting that at peak times, up to 70% of all A&E admissions stem from alcohol abuse.¹

Substance misuse a key priority for Staffordshire

Substance misuse, whether referring to alcohol or drugs is a central part of local community safety strategies in Staffordshire. Within the county, substance misuse features heavily in all of the 2005-08 Community Safety Strategies. In most cases, priorities for the partnerships include tackling alcohol and drug-related crime and fear of this, tackling binge drinking amongst young people, improving access to treatment and improving education and tackling social exclusion. Substance misuse is also prioritised in the county wide strategies of Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Police.

There is an obvious link between substance misuse and the Safer & Stronger Communities block of the Local Area Agreement for Staffordshire. However, due to the cross-cutting nature of issues related to substance misuse this impacts on most of the other blocks of the LAA, in particular the Healthier Communities and Older People block and the Children and Young People block.

Key Findings

Drugs and recorded crime

Drug offences dealt with under the Misuse of Drugs Act 2005 and related legislation accounted for 3.6% of all recorded crime in Staffordshire in 2005/06. This equated to around 2,500 recorded drug offences – up by 31.4% over the last three years – of which the vast majority (88%) were for drug possession. The increase, for the most part, was due to a large increase in recorded possession of cocaine (up by over 100 offences or 155% over the last 3 years) and a 45% increase in charges for cannabis possession (up by over 500 offences).

South Staffordshire was the district experiencing by far the highest rate of drug possession offences (4.5 per 1000 population) but this is attributable to the annual ‘V festival’ held in Weston Park, during which a considerable number of drug arrests are made.

The majority of drug possession offences tend to be committed by young people; almost two-thirds (63%) were committed by those aged between 16 and 24 years old.

There were 288 recorded offences for drug trafficking in 2005/06 equating to a rate of 0.4 per 1000 population. This represents a slight (4.3%) increase over the last 3 years. The biggest proportion (43%) of drug trafficking was for heroin. Trafficking offences for heroin have more than doubled in the last three years; from 61 in 2003/04 to 125 in 2005/06. Newcastle-Under-Lyme is the district with the highest offence rate for drug trafficking (0.6 per 1000 population) and where there has been the most significant increase in heroin trafficking in the last three years; up from 4 offences in 2003/04 to 62 offences in 2005-06.

In Staffordshire in 2005/06 there were just under 500 offences recorded where the offender was thought to be under the influence of drugs, a decrease of a third (33%) over the last three years. The largest proportion of offences where the offender was thought to be under the influence of drugs was predictably drug offences, accounting for 38% (187 offences) followed by violence 37% (181 offences).

Alcohol and recorded crime

In Staffordshire in 2005/06 there were just over five thousand offences committed where the offender was under the influence of alcohol. Around two-thirds of these offences took place on a weekend and around three-quarters of all these offences were for violent crime. The level of alcohol related crime has remained fairly stable across Staffordshire over the last three years, although this has varied by district with decreases in some areas (e.g. East Staffordshire) and increases in others. The biggest increase and the highest rates were in the districts of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Tamworth where the alcohol-related crime rate per thousand population was 12.7 and 8 respectively, compared to a County figure of 6.2 per thousand population.

Substance misuse and offending

Drugs and alcohol are a key factor in offending behaviour in around two-thirds of adult offenders in Staffordshire. Staffordshire Youth Offending Service Users had substance misuse flagged as a potential problem in around a quarter of cases (263 out of 1040).

In Staffordshire the majority of alcohol-related offences are committed by young people. Nine-out-of-ten (92%) alcohol-related offences are committed by people aged under 45 years old and almost half (48%) are committed by people aged between 16 and 24 years. This is in line with national findings. Young people are also the most likely to be victims of alcohol-related offences.

Substance misuse and Anti-social behaviour

Recorded incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Staffordshire whereby the offender was caught drinking in the street have increased considerably over the last 2 years; from 637 incidents in 2005-06 to 1486 incidents in 2006-07, with all districts seeing dramatic increases. This could reflect a real change in patterns or could be in part attributable to a change in policing or recording practices.

Perceptions of substance misuse and community safety

Perceptions of problems related to drug and alcohol misuse have improved considerably over the last three years.

Community perceptions of problems with people being rowdy or drunk in public places in Staffordshire County are down by a quarter (25%) over the last 3 years. All districts have witnessed large decreases, with the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands where there was a slight increase on an already low figure.

Similarly, community perceptions of problems with drug use or dealing in their local area are down by almost a fifth (18%) in Staffordshire over the last 3 years. Again, this reduction is reflected in all districts, except for Staffordshire Moorlands. Perceptions of problematic drug use/dealing were highest in Cannock Chase, where nearly two-thirds of the population (64%) believe it to be a problem in their local area, followed by Tamworth (57%). Three district areas experienced rates of concern below the county average; Stafford Borough, South Staffordshire and Lichfield, of which South Staffordshire had by far the lowest rate of concern (just 31%). There appears to be no clear relationship between levels of police recorded drug offences and local perceptions of problematic drug use/dealing.

Substance misuse and domestic violence

In 2005/06 the offender was under the influence of alcohol in around a quarter of all recorded domestic violence incidents in Staffordshire County (just over a thousand incidents). In some districts this was as high as 42% of incidents (Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough).

Drink driving

There was a large increase in the number of drink driving offences from 2003/04 to 2004/05 followed by a considerable fall the next year in 2005/06. This was evident in all districts in Staffordshire.

Substance misuse and fatal fires

National data shows that in a third of all fatal fires the person was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the fire. Alongside the main cause of the fire, alcohol is one of the biggest single influences on whether a fire starts and/or whether it has fatal consequences.

Drug Misuse and Community Safety in Staffordshire

I.1 Recorded Drug Offences

The recorded crime figures for drug possession and trafficking are thought to seriously understate the true extent of drug crime. The statistics will also be heavily influenced by local policing priorities in response to local drug problems and may reflect changes in the policing of drug crime rather than real changes in its incidence. A significant number of arrests are made for possession of drugs, which may only be discovered once an individual has been arrested for another offence. Similarly the number of drug searches actioned will have a significant impact on the number of drug offences recorded. These searches and warrants will be actioned depending on policing resources and priorities at the time.

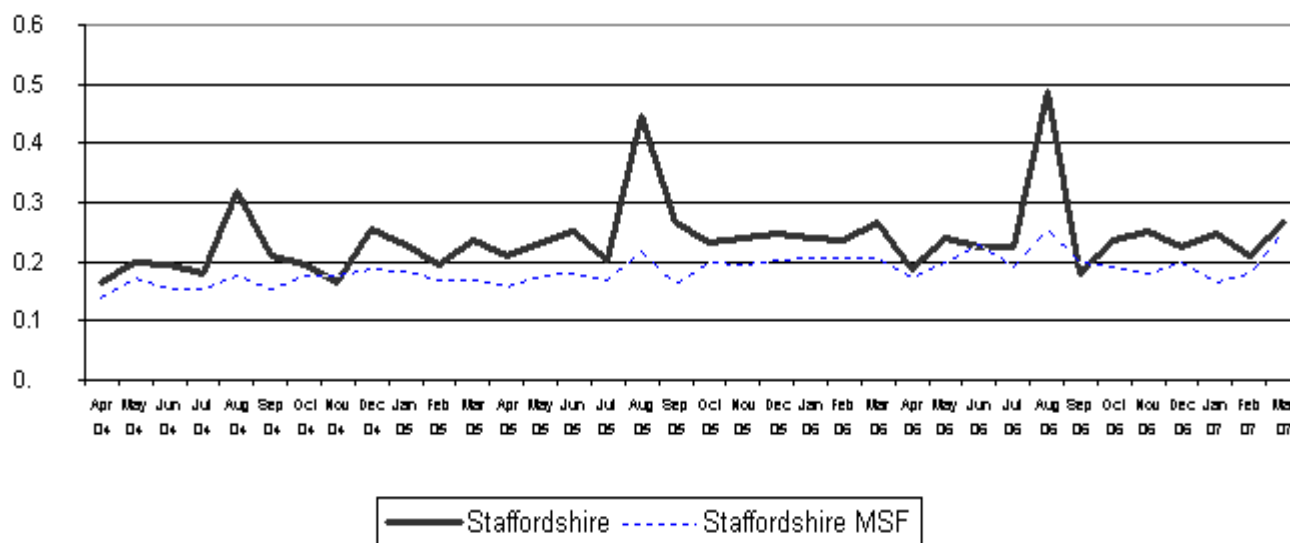
Drug offences dealt with under the Misuse of Drugs Act 2005 and related legislation currently account for 3.6% of all recorded crime in Staffordshire (see table 1).

Table 1: Recorded Drug Offences

| Year | Possession of controlled drugs | Trafficking in controlled drugs | Total Drug Offences | Total Recorded Crime | Drug crime as a % of all crime |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2003/2004 | 1621 | 276 | 1897 | 77748 | 2.40% |
| 2004/2005 | 1747 | 271 | 2018 | 66658 | 3.00% |
| 2005/2006 | 2204 | 288 | 2492 | 69733 | 3.60% |

Figure 1 sourced from Iquanta; an internet-based analysis tool using Home Office collected police data, reveals that levels of overall drug crime in the Staffordshire Force area (which includes Stoke-On-Trent) are above those recorded by the Force's comparator group, although in recent months that gap appears to be narrowing. Large peaks can clearly be seen in August each year caused by the annual 'V Festival' held at Western park in Staffordshire.

Figure 1: Overall Drug Crimes per 1000 residents in Staffordshire 01/04/2004 – 31/03/2007



Comparison Chart - Crimes per 1000 Residents Staffordshire Drug Offences 01 Apr 2004 - 31 Mar 2007

1.11 Recorded Offences for Drug Possession

In Staffordshire, there were 2492 recorded drug offences in 2005-2006, a 31.4% increase over the last 3 years. Offences of drug possession make up the vast majority of these drug offences, with 2204 offences of possession being recorded in 2005-06, a 36% increase over the last 3 years. The increase, for the most part, was due to a 155.4% increase in the recording of possession of cocaine (up by 101 offences over the last 3 years). There was also a 45.1% increase in charges for cannabis possession (up by 525 offences). This coincided with an increase of 128.7% in the number of formal warnings for the possession of cannabis that were issued (up by 758 offences). This increase in formal warnings, firstly introduced nationally in April 2004, can therefore account for the majority of the increase in recorded crime for cannabis possession. Changes in reporting and recording practices will also affect numbers of recorded offences.

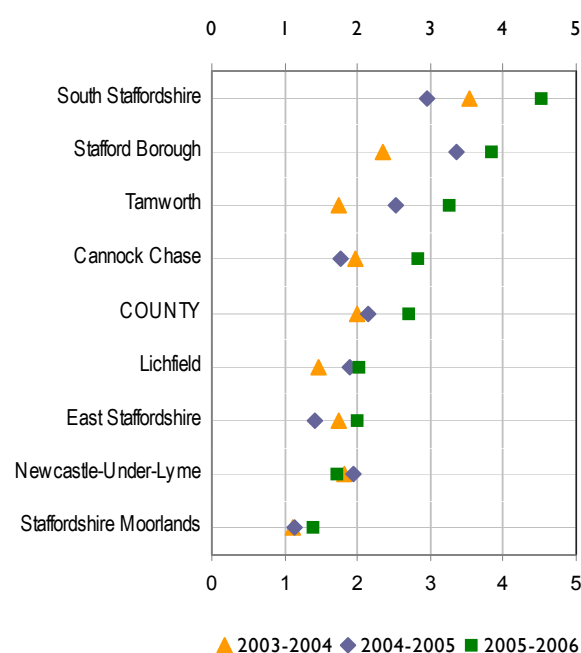
Table 2: Drug Possession in Staffordshire by Drug Type for 2005-06

| | Number | % |
|---------------|--------|-------|
| Cannabis | 1689 | 76.6% |
| Heroin | 173 | 7.8% |
| Cocaine | 166 | 7.5% |
| Ecstasy | 78 | 3.5% |
| Amphetamines | 74 | 3.4% |
| Other Drug | 12 | 0.5% |
| Other Class A | 7 | 0.3% |
| Crack | 5 | 0.2% |
| Total | 2204 | |

As mentioned previously, in 2005-06 the vast majority of possession offences involved the Class C drug Cannabis; around three-quarters (76.6%) of all possession offences. As can be seen in Table 2, heroin possession is the next biggest problem, accounting for 7.8% of all possession offences. This is closely followed by possession of cocaine which accounts for 7.5%.

South Staffordshire stands out as witnessing by far the highest number of drug possession offences with 4.5 per 1000 population (this is illustrated in Figure 2). In 2003-04 the rate stood at 3.4 per 1000 population but was still the highest in the county. This high rate can be attributed to the annual 'V festival' held in Weston Park, during which an extremely high number of drug arrests are made. Stafford Borough also has a high rate at 3.8 per 1000 population. In 2003-04 this figure was 2.3 per 1000 population. Although not the highest rate, Tamworth has seen the biggest increase of drug possession offences per 1000 population; this has increased from 1.8 in 2003-04 to 3.2 per 1000 population in 2005-06. At the other end of the scale, Staffordshire Moorlands has by far the lowest rate of possession offences; 1.4 per 1000 population in 2005-06. This has seen a slight increase on the 2003-04 figure of 1.1 per 1000 population, when Staffordshire Moorlands still had the lowest rate in the county. Newcastle-Under-Lyme has seen a small decrease from 1.8 per 1000 population in 2003-04 to 1.7 in 2005-06.

Figure 2: Drug Possession per 1000 population



Recorded crime statistics illustrate that in 2005-06 the majority of drug possession offenders were men; 97.3%, with just 2.7% being committed by women. The majority of possession offences tend to be committed by young people; 39% committed by those aged between 19 and 24, 24% committed by those aged 16-18 and 3.4% committed by those aged 15 or under. There is also a fairly large proportion being committed by those aged between 25 and 34; 24.8% of all possession offences. With the remaining offenders being aged between 35 and 44; 6.8%, and aged between 45 and 65; 2%. Findings from the 2005-06 BCS reveal that the use of an illicit drug in the past year amongst 16-59 year olds has remained fairly stable since 1998, despite an increase in Class A drug use, mainly due to an increase in the use of cocaine.

1.12 Recorded Offences for Drug Trafficking

The number of offences for Drug Trafficking in Staffordshire is far lower than those of possession, with just 288 offences recorded in 2005-06; a 4.3% increase over the last 3 years. This equates to a rate of just 0.4 offences per 1000 population. Figure 5 shows that the pattern of charges for drug trafficking across the districts also differs to possession; however this may well be due to the small numbers involved. It is also important to note that these statistics are heavily influenced by local intelligence and local policing priorities so are accepted to be only a snapshot of the real drug trafficking problem. In contrast to drug possession, Figure 5 for drug trafficking clearly shows the highest offence rate was in Newcastle-Under-Lyme; 0.6 per 1000 population in 2005-06. This area aside, the majority of Staffordshire experienced very similar rates consistent with the County average of 0.4 per 1000 population. Staffordshire Moorlands has however seen a decrease from 0.3% in 2003-04 to just 0.1 per 1000 population in 2005-06; by far the lowest in the county (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Drug Trafficking Offences per 1000 population

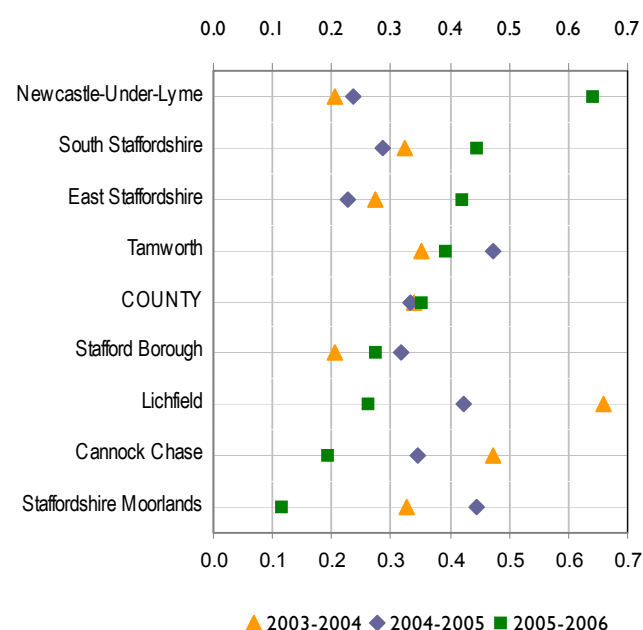


Table 3: Drug Trafficking in Staffordshire by Drug Type for 2005-06

| | Number | % |
|---------------|--------|-------|
| Heroin | 125 | 43.4% |
| Cannabis | 95 | 33.0% |
| Cocaine | 20 | 6.9% |
| Amphetamines | 15 | 5.2% |
| Ecstasy | 14 | 4.9% |
| Other Drug | 13 | 4.5% |
| Other Class A | 4 | 1.4% |
| Crack | 2 | 0.7% |
| Total | 288 | |

As can be seen in Table 3, the biggest proportion of drug trafficking was for Heroin (43%). Trafficking offences for Heroin have more than doubled in the last 3 years going from 61 in 2003-04 to 125 in 2005-06. Newcastle-Under-Lyme has seen the most significant heroin trafficking increase in the last 3 years increasing from 4 offences to 62 offences in 2005-06. All Districts have seen big increases in Heroin trafficking offences, with the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands and Cannock Chase who have seen a decrease. Trafficking of Cannabis also accounts for a large proportion of offences (33%), although recorded trafficking of Cannabis in Staffordshire has decreased by 26.4% in the last 3 years. Cocaine accounts for 7% of recorded drug trafficking offences in

Staffordshire. Charges for trafficking of cocaine have shown a decrease of 25.9% over the last 3 years in Staffordshire, in contrast to the large increase of possession of Cocaine offences. This further highlights that recorded drug offences cannot be taken as a realistic picture of the drug problems in Staffordshire and are more a reflection of police intelligence and police priorities as previously mentioned. A small percentage of trafficking offences were for Ecstasy (5%), Other drug (5%), Crack (5%) and other Class A drugs (1%).

The profile of drug trafficking offenders differs slightly to possession offenders, with the majority aged between 25 and 34 (37.5%). The next biggest group of trafficking offenders are aged between 19 and 24 (21.2%) and then aged between 35 and 44 (19.4%). With the remaining offenders being aged between 45 and 65 (11.1%), aged 16 to 18 (8.7%) and worryingly aged 15 or under (2.1%). It is important to remember that these age profiles are specific to comparatively low numbers of recorded trafficking offences and for that reason are indicative only.

1.2 Drug Related Crime

Drug misuse gives rise to between £10 billion and £18 billion a year Nationally in estimated social and economic costs within the NHS and criminal justice system⁴, 99% of which are accounted for by problematic users. The links between drug use and crime are clearly established. As previously mentioned, recorded drug offences are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to assessing the contribution which drug misuse makes to the level of offending in the community. There is powerful evidence which indicates that many other offences; such as burglary, robbery, shoplifting and violence, are often drug-related, in particular in providing drug users with the money to support the purchase of drugs. The average price for a gramme of cocaine is around £40-£50, with a gramme of heroin costing around £35-£40. With problematic drug users reported to be spending between £40-£150 a day on their habit, this often leads to them offending to purchase their drugs. Research undertaken by the Home Office states that around three-quarters of crack and heroin users claim they commit acquisitive crime (usually some form of stealing) to feed their habit.⁵

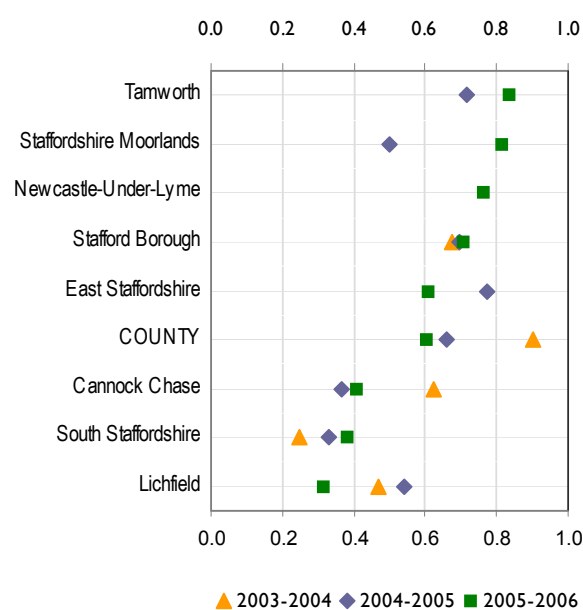
1.2.1 Offenders Under the Influence Of Drugs

At a local level, we can examine the link between drugs and crime by analysis of crime records. When recording a crime, police officers are able to flag whether the offender is under the influence of drugs, based on the officer's or victim's perceptions. Whilst this information can be a useful guide to the prevalence of drug related crime, the measure is very much a subjective one. It important to consider the following:

- The perception that the offender is under the influence of drugs may not be accurate, or may have little bearing on the crime itself.
- Many people who are dependant on drugs were involved in criminal activity before becoming dependent, so the drug use may not be the cause of the crime.
- Often poverty, unemployment and social exclusion are underlying factors rather than the drug use itself.
- Some users have jobs, benefits or other forms of income that are used to purchase drugs.

In Staffordshire in 2005-06 there were 493 offences recorded where the offender was thought to be under the influence of drugs, a decrease of around a third (32.5%) over the last 3 years. Based on Staffordshire Police statistics there are 3 districts with a problem in terms of drug related crime; Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands and Tamworth, who all exhibit rates of 0.8 per 1000 population. Stafford Borough is also above the County average with a rate of 0.7 per 1000 population. The remainder of Staffordshire experienced rates below the County average. Figure 4 suggests that offences committed whilst under the influence of drugs are decreasing in Staffordshire. This is consistent across the majority of the County, with the exception of South Staffordshire and Stafford Borough. The largest increase has taken place in South Staffordshire, with the largest decrease experienced in Newcastle-Under-Lyme.

Figure 4: Offences in which the offender is affected by drugs per 1000 population



The police database allows us to look closer at which crime types are committed by offenders thought to be under the influence of drugs. For the period 2005-06, the majority of offences committed by those thought to be under the influence of drugs were predicatively, either for drug offences (37.9% or 187 offences) or for violence (36.7% or 181 offences). Drug use has historically been linked to violent crime; where drug trafficking in particular tends to be associated with violence. Reasons for this link can include competition for drug markets, disputes and rip-off disagreements between drug traffickers and users. It is unlikely that drugs actually make people violent. It is usually the case that those committing violent acts under the influence of drugs have pre-drug use violent histories. Drugs can thus be a catalyst in some cases but not a cause.

The remaining offences committed by offenders thought to be under the influence of drugs were for criminal damage (12.4%), theft and burglary (10.5%) and other crimes including fraud and handling of stolen goods (2.5%). It is well publicised that prolific drug users will often commit acquisitive crime to fund their drug habit. Although only 10.5% of offences (52 offences) were in the acquisitive crime category, it is important to remember that these figures are a snapshot only and it is not always possible to ascertain if the offender is indeed under the influence of drugs. Furthermore, it does not include acquisitive crime to fund drug use committed whilst not under the influence.

Drug use is notoriously linked to the night-time economy of pubs and clubs. It is therefore not surprising to see that the bulk of these drug related crimes (57.8%) occurred between Friday and Sunday (Friday 20.4%, Saturday 21%, Sunday 16.3%). The large part of the violence offences are focused in and around town centres and usually around nightclubs and pubs.

1.22 Anti-Social Behaviour and Substance Misuse

Recorded incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour and substance misuse in Staffordshire are relatively small, with just 16 incidents being recorded in 2005-06 and 20 in 2006-07. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) undermines our communities creating an environment of fear and neglect; it is therefore encouraging to see that drug related ASB incidents are minimal in Staffordshire. Please note however that some ASB incidents may go unrecorded because of fear of reprisal. The ASB Act helps the police and local authorities to work together with local people to tackle ASB and protect victims of ASB and the communities most affected by the problem. This is discussed further in section 1.31 (Closures of Premises Where Drugs Are Used Unlawfully).

1.23 Drug Driving

Whilst drinking and driving has long been identified as a serious problem, driving under the influence of drugs has only recently been identified as a problem. RAC statistics state that since 1988 there has been a six-fold increase in the number of people killed in road accidents who had traces of illegal drugs in their body⁶. In 2005-2006 in Staffordshire there has only been one positive drug test for drug driving. Whilst this may suggest that there is not a problem with drug driving in the area, it is more likely to reflect police activity.

1.24 Domestic Violence and Drug Misuse

Domestic Violence is defined by the Home Office as “any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse”.

The links between Domestic Violence and drug misuse are extremely complex. The most common links are:

- Women use drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with the abuse – this has huge Health and Safety implications for refuges and keeps the victims dependant on the perpetrator.
 - Drugs may be used by the perpetrator to justify the violence
 - Women; who are often also forced into prostitution, are forced to become dependant on drugs by the perpetrator as a further controlling mechanism
 - It can be extremely difficult for women to access drug treatment/services as they are often mixed sex and there is no provision for child care
- Women who are mothers are often reluctant to access drug treatment through fear of social services becoming involved

As can be seen in Table 4, recorded crime statistics provided by Staffordshire Police illustrate that the offender was under the influence of drugs in 1.45% of recorded domestic violence incidents (60 incidents out of 4140), this figure was 3% in 2003-04 (124 incidents out of 4154).

Staffordshire Moorlands exhibits the largest percentage rate ;2.8% (circled right), with Tamworth, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Lichfield and Stafford Borough also showing a higher rate than the County average. East Staffordshire and Cannock Chase are highlighted as having the lowest percentage rates (0.9% and 0.4% respectively).

Table 4: Domestic Violence Incidents

| Data for period 2005-2006 | All Domestic Violence Incidents | | Domestic Violence - Offender Under Influence of Drugs | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|------------------------|
| | Number of Incidents | per 1000 population | Number of Incidents | % of Domestic Violence |
| Staffs moorlands | 213 | 2.3 | 6 | 2.8% |
| Tamworth | 455 | 6.1 | 12 | 2.6% |
| Newcastle-Under-Lyme | 534 | 4.3 | 14 | 2.6% |
| Lichfield | 282 | 3.0 | 7 | 2.5% |
| Stafford Borough | 499 | 4.0 | 10 | 2.0% |
| South Staffordshire | 281 | 2.7 | 5 | 1.8% |
| East Staffordshire | 445 | 4.2 | 4 | 0.9% |
| Cannock Chase | 547 | 5.9 | 2 | 0.4% |
| County | 3256 | 4.0 | 60 | 1.8% |

A great deal of caution is necessary in interpreting these patterns as an indication of the relative prevalence of drug misuse surrounding domestic violence. Domestic Violence has been highlighted by Staffordshire Police Force as a priority area whereby targets are to increase the reporting of Domestic Violence incidents each year. The aim of this is to encourage victims to come forward and report the offenders and not be afraid. However it is possible for example that many Domestic Violence Incidents; some of which may be affected by or be as a result of drug misuse, will go unreported due to the victims being too frightened or embarrassed to report the incidents. Domestic Violence is covered in further detail in section 2.2 – Domestic Violence and Alcohol Misuse.

1.3 Reducing the Supply of Drugs

The availability of drugs and drug trafficking in our communities is often accompanied by violence, disruption, harassment and intimidation. Readily obtainable drugs make it easier for young people to develop into problematic drug users, and harder for ex-drug users to stay clean. It also sustains problematic drug users who in turn damage themselves, their families and their communities, as well as society more widely.⁷

The government has implemented an action plan to reduce the supply of drugs, which is therefore directed to generate a sustained impact on the supply of Class A drugs in the UK, and its availability within its communities.

1.31 Closures of Premises Where Drugs Are Used Unlawfully

Crack cocaine is now a feature of the UK's class A drug market. Powers are needed to enable the swift closure of properties taken over by drug dealers and users of Crack cocaine and other Class A drugs. The influx of a crack house in a community is a severe threat to the safety and well-being of its residents. The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Act means that rapid action can be taken to shut them down and keep them closed. Crack house closures are executed due to continued ASB, which can often be further fuelled by prostitutes hanging around to obtain crack after being paid by punters. This would clearly cause major concerns for local residents. Since the selling of these drugs is linked to ASB, there are grounds for a Closure order to be implemented. The ASB Act helps the police and local authorities to work together with local people to tackle ASB and protect victims of ASB and the communities most affected by the problem.

Key points of the Act are as follows:

- A senior police officer can issue a Closure Notice on premises they have reason to believe are being used for the production, supply or use of Class A drugs and are causing serious nuisance or disorder
- The police must then apply to the court within 48 hours for a Closure Order. The Court must be satisfied that: the premises have been used in connection with the production, supply or use of Class A drugs, the premises is associated with disorder or serious nuisance and, an Order is necessary to prevent the occurrence of disorder/serious nuisance
- The Closure Order can apply for up to 3 months, with the ability to extend it to a maximum of 6 months. During this period entering or remaining in the property will be an offence and the premises will be boarded up and sealed⁸

Data obtained from Staffordshire Police states that only a small number of Crack House Closures have taken place in Staffordshire in the last 3 years; North Staffordshire Division executed 1 in 2004, Trent Valley had 3 in 2004 and 1 in 2006, to date Chase Division have had no closures. Although these numbers are only small, the closure of one crack house can have a massive beneficial impact on the local community. The likelihood is that these premises will have blighted the community for years.

The authority to implement a crack house closure is a very powerful tool which can also be applied to licensed premises. This has yet to be implemented in Staffordshire, but if licensed premises are threatened with a 3 months closure order then they are expected to do everything in their power to comply, or face losing massive profits.

1.32 'Ion Track' Drug Testing Machine

Staffordshire Police use their "Ion Track" drug testing machines in and around pubs and clubs across the county to combat the use of illegal substances in the leisure industry. The £40,000 machine can detect all Class A, B and C drugs and is used by swiping any surface, including hands or clothes, with a swab paper. Analysis only takes a few seconds and the resulting reading indicates how many drugs are present in the sample and at what levels. It is so sensitive it can detect the equivalent in drugs of a grain of salt in an Olympic-sized pool. It must be borne in mind however that anyone taking the test can test positive as a result of cross contamination from door handles or money for example.

A machine is owned by each of the divisions in Staffordshire and used for the main at weekends, in the evenings to screen people entering nightclubs and pubs. Pub and Club owners allow the police officers to stand near the doors and test people as they enter. Anyone testing positive is not permitted to enter the premises. They are then consequently searched and if found in possession of an illegal drug, are arrested and dealt with accordingly.

Although no official statistics are currently available, on an average night in the Chase Division, around 200 people are tested over a 2 hour period. Of these, around 5-10% usually test positive for having been in contact with illegal drugs, the majority being cocaine.

This testing machine gives out a strong anti-drugs message from the police. If people know this machine is out there and being used, it could deter them from using drugs through fear that they might get caught.

1.33 Drug Seizures

There can be considerable fluctuation in the quantities of drugs seized over time. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities; for example, according to the Home Office, between a third and a half of heroin, crack and cocaine seizures involve quantities of less than one gram; annual totals of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures. The quantities of drugs seized by Staffordshire Police in Staffordshire can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Drugs seized in Staffordshire County by Staffordshire Police in 2005-06

| | County | North Staffs Division % | Trent Valley Division % | Chase Division % |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Cocaine | 2.3 kilograms | 70.50% | 16.00% | 13.50% |
| Heroin | 1.6 kilograms | 64.30% | 25.70% | 10.00% |
| Amphetamine | 2.3 kilograms | 63.10% | 19.30% | 17.70% |
| Ecstasy | 3871 tablets | 61.30% | 12.10% | 26.60% |
| Cannabis | 49.3 kilograms | 38.20% | 11.60% | 50.20% |
| Cannabis plants | 477 plants | 10.90% | 52.60% | 36.50% |
| Diazepam | 949 tablets | 1.10% | 89.00% | 9.90% |
| Crack | 108 grams | 0.60% | 91.70% | 7.70% |
| G.H.B tablets | 4570 tablets | 0.00% | 13.60% | 68.40% |

In addition to seizing drugs, the police now have the power to seize drug dealers' assets and claw back some of the profits they have made from illegally selling drugs. In the year 2006-07, £122,642 was confiscated through drug confiscation orders in Staffordshire (figure includes Stoke-On-Trent).

I.4 Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) Scheme

The National Prolific and other Priority Offender (PPO) Programme was launched in September 2004. It includes a programme of monitored activities designed to assist offenders to break the cycle of offending by changing their criminal behaviour and actions. The scheme targets the minority of offenders responsible for the disproportionately high amounts of volume crime, notably acquisitive crime (burglary, vehicle crime, robbery, theft, drugs and fraud). PPO's are identified for the scheme using a scoring matrix tailored to suit local priorities, and identify, target, monitor and rehabilitate those offenders who cause most harm to themselves and the local community.

Offenders are targeted through the 'Catch and Convict' (C&C) strand of the PPO strategy and through direct targeting using Intelligence. C&C begins when an individual has been identified as being a suitable PPO for the scheme. The 'Rehabilitate and Resettle' (R&R) strand begins when the offender is actually aware they are on the scheme and have signed a formal agreement. Offenders attend a minimum of 4 appointments per week. All appointments must be attended and the offender must not be under the influence of any substance or alcohol. Those that fail to attend face swift enforcement action on their Community Orders or Prison License. Those that are on license release from Prison can be swiftly recalled back to Prison if they fail to comply; including committing further offences or testing positive for Class A drugs. The project will also return to courts offenders who do not comply with any Drug Rehabilitation Requirement, including regular drug testing. The scheme aims to prevent future offending by giving offenders the opportunity to gain qualifications, helping them to find employment, access to counselling and drug rehabilitation.

Table 6: Numbers on PPO Schemes in Staffordshire

| | Numbers on PPO Scheme | PPO's accessing Treatment |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Stafford Borough | 36 | 5 |
| Tamworth | 28 | 5 |
| Newcastle-Under-Lyme | 25 | 8 |
| Cannock Chase | 23 | 4 |
| East Staffordshire | 23 | 4 |
| Staffordshire Moorlands | 22 | 7 |
| Lichfield | 7 | 1 |
| South Staffordshire | 6 | 0 |
| County | 170 | 34 |

Around Staffordshire, each Police Division runs a PPO scheme. There are currently 170 individuals on the scheme (this includes C&C and R&R) 34 of which are accessing drug treatment (see table 6). Numbers of PPO's accessing drug treatment are low compared to overall PPO's. This is due to the fact that the majority of these PPO's will be on the C&C strand and so will not yet have signed up to drug treatment and may indeed be unaware that they have been identified as a PPO.

The number of PPO's are fairly low in the county as the scheme is relatively new. It is very important that the right people are identified for the schemes who will respond to it positively as the related costs of supervision and involvement are high.

With the exception of 3 offenders in Newcastle-Under-Lyme and 1 in Staffordshire Moorlands, all offenders on the PPO scheme in Staffordshire are males, with the majority being aged between 21 and 42.

There is strong evidence that intervening in these prolific, primarily drug-dependant offenders can have a hugely positive impact on Community Safety in Staffordshire. There have been massive reductions in levels of an individuals offending in the County when comparing levels of offending before and after PPO drug treatment. Reductions of up to 87% in charges of offenders after or during treatment when compared to the same period before their treatment have been reported. This reduction in crime is a result of the hard work and commitment of the PPO project team and its partners in giving offenders an alternative to Prison and re-offending. The project is not an easy option for offenders, but those who want to change and are prepared to demonstrate their commitment are given all the support and access to services they need.

PPO schemes are clearly having success in immediately reducing offending and targeting problematic drug users. However the long-term impact of the scheme is difficult to measure and offenders are not tracked long-term after leaving the schemes. Further research also needs to be carried out looking at the impact on overall offending patterns in the local areas, not just the offending of individual PPO's.

1.5 Drug Intervention Programmes

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) is a crime reduction programme that aims to encourage problem drug-using offenders to access dedicated treatment programmes. The DIP is a key part of the Government's strategy for tackling drugs and reducing crime and there is evidence of some success with drug-related crime falling by a fifth since the DIP started and large numbers of people are being helped with their drug misuse.⁹

As mentioned in previous sections, people who misuse Class A drugs often commit crime to fund their drug habit. As a result they can get caught in a cycle of drug misuse, crime and prison. The DIP aims to break this cycle by providing several interventions for moving offenders away from drug misuse and into treatment. The DIP brings together the police, the courts, the prison service, probation, treatment providers, after care support services, government departments and Drug Action Teams.⁹

The DIP consists of 3 strands:

- **Arrest Referral** – Offering drug using offenders at the point of arrest, drug treatment and related services with a view to reducing their drug misuse (discussed further in section 1.51)
- **Through Care** – Continuity of care provided to a drug misuser from the point of arrest through to sentence and beyond. Offenders are supported by criminal justice agencies, treatment agencies and aftercare support services that share information to ensure the offender is receiving the most appropriate and beneficial treatment.
- **After Care** – Looking after the offenders when they are released from custodial sentences, complete community sentences and/or leave drug treatment. Criminal Justice Integrated Teams work with housing, health, employment, finance and family support agencies to deliver this service to the offender.

Not all offenders referred to the DIP will be taken onto the programme. They may not recognise that they need help for example or just do not want any help, or it may be concluded that they are not suitable for the DIP. A detailed assessment of the offenders need for intervention will be done by the Drug Action Team and once the offender is accepted onto the programme a suitable care plan is drawn up for them.

In Staffordshire in 2005-06, 939 offenders were referred to the DIP, of which 213 signed up to a programme (22.7%). In 2006-07, 1030 offenders were referred, of which 386 were signed on to a programme (37.5%); a 9.7% increase in referrals and an 8.1% increase in those starting the programme. It is positive to see there is also a 14.8% increase in the proportion of those referred to the DIP actually signing up to a programme.

Table 7: Main Drug Type used by Offender on DIP 2006-07

| Substance | Number of users |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Heroin | 245 |
| Cannabis | 46 |
| Crack | 31 |
| Cocaine | 20 |
| Amphetamines | 17 |
| Benzodiazepines | 11 |
| Methadone | 7 |
| Main drug not stated | 4 |
| Ecstasy | 3 |
| Other | 2 |

As can be seen in Table 7, a sizeable 63.5% of clients on DIP reported Heroin as the main drug that they use. 11.9% stated Cannabis was the main drug they use, 8% stated crack and 5.7% cocaine. Other drugs used were amphetamines (4.4%), benzodiazepines (2.8%), methadone (1.8%) and ecstasy (0.8%).

Statistics held by the DIP illustrate that in 2006-07 over three-quarters of offenders on the programme were men; 76.2% with 23.8% women. The majority of these were white; 97.4% with the remainder being Asian (0.5%), black (0.3%) and mixed race (0.3%). The bulk of these offenders (87.6%) are aged between 18 and 40 years old. This data is inline with statistics held for recorded drug possession offences which showed a large proportion (87.9%) of offenders are aged between 16 and 34, and recorded trafficking offences where a large proportion of offenders (78.1%) were aged between 19 and 44.

Every pound spent on treatment saves £9.50 in related costs. The programmes initiatives are expected to save at least £4.4 billion over the next 8 years. The DIP is successfully reaching hard-to-reach groups and is a benefit to all. Benefits include:⁹

- Drug-using offenders receive specialised treatment and ongoing support
- The criminal Justice system targets drug-using offenders effectively
- Communities suffer less crime
- The tax payer pays out less for criminal justice costs

1.51 Arrest Referral Schemes

The Arrest Referral Scheme is the first strand of the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP), the aim of which is to get people into drug treatment. Drug Action Team (DAT) workers approach arrestees in the Police cells and ask whether they have a substance misuse problem and require help with treatment. If a DAT worker is not present, arrestees are given a card and may attend a drop in session up to 28 days after arrest. A great advantage of this scheme is that those in need of help are fast-tracked into treatment and can receive prescribing services within a few days. The Scheme is currently only funded to help those with drug problems. Despite this, arrest referral workers do continue to help those asking for alcohol treatment and refer them to ADSIS (Alcohol and Drugs Services in Staffordshire).

Arrest referral centres in Staffordshire can be found in Tamworth, Burton-on-Trent, Stafford and Cannock, as well as Stoke-on-Trent which also caters for the North of the county. In order to identify the types of people coming into contact with Arrest Referral, a sample dataset was taken from Chase Division. Whilst this will only show the profile of offenders in this Division, the findings may be considered indicative of the whole County area. The total number of clients dealt with in Chase Division for the period 1st May 2006 to 31st January 2007 was 117; of which 91.5% were men and 8.5% women. The majority of Arrest Referral clients were young: only 17% (20 people) were aged over 36 years old and none of those were older than 50.

The Arrest Referral database also enables us to look at the ethnicity of clients. This shows that 90.6% were white, with the remaining being black (1.7%), Asian (0.9%) or unknown (6.8%).

Clients on the Arrest Referral Scheme are asked what drugs they are using or have used in the past. Research for Chase Division shows heroin as the main drug type being used, followed by Crack, Cannabis and Cocaine. DAT workers emphasise that the vast majority of clients referred to the service are addicted to heroin and often use a number of other drugs in addition. By going on to an arrest referral scheme, these offenders who are highly addicted to drugs can receive ongoing specialist support and be fast-tracked into drug treatment to help them with their addiction. Home Office findings show that arrest referral schemes effectively target prolific problem drug using offenders and significantly reduce their levels of re-offending.

1.52 Drug Testing For Trigger Offences

As discussed previously, crime and offending can be strongly linked as the proceeds of crime may be used to fund addiction to drugs such as heroin and Crack Cocaine. Powers to allow police to drug test people arrested for certain trigger offences came into force on 1st December 2005 as part of the Drugs Act 2005. The government introduced these powers after consultation with the police, courts and drug agencies with the aim of reducing drug-related crime by getting offenders into treatment. Initially they were only being piloted in those police areas with the highest rates of drug-linked crime. The new powers are a key part of the Governments Drug Strategy. Key points of the powers are:

- Offenders will be tested for heroin, crack and cocaine on arrest for 'Trigger' acquisitive crimes, such as robbery, theft and burglary
- Offenders who refuse to provide a sample for the test or comply with a required assessment face a penalty fine of up to £2500 and/or up to three months in prison
- Courts will be able to deny bail unless the offender agrees to a drug assessment
- Those who test positive will be required to attend a compulsory drug assessment by drug workers to determine the extent of their drug problem and allocated a programme of support or treatment

Chase Division are part of the national pilot scheme, where if a suspect is charged with a trigger offence then they are automatically drug tested using a sample of oral fluid. Data submitted by the Chase pilot for January to December 2006 shows that 588 tests were completed on offenders, of which almost half (45.4%; 267 tests) were positive for Heroin, Crack or cocaine. This is broadly similar to national figures where 42.6% of those charged with a trigger offence tested positive for Class A drugs, although the time frames are not directly comparable. Of those offenders in Chase Division that tested positive for a Class A drug, 78% were charged with theft, and 7.1% were charged with burglary. Data from Chase Division suggests that opiates are most strongly linked to the acquisitive trigger offences. Of the 267 positive tests returned, opiates were present in 85% of the results, with cocaine or crack present in 42%. This differs slightly to the National picture where a slightly higher proportion of positive tests were for cocaine, but a lower number for opiates.

I.53 Drug Rehabilitation Requirement Service (DRR) (covers alcohol and drugs)

Staffordshire Probation are committed to: ¹⁰

- Ensure offenders complete their sentence in the community and take them back to court if not
- Provide information to Staffordshire courts to help sentencing
- Safely supervise people serving their sentence in the community
- Prepare prisoners for release and supervise them on license afterwards
- Liase with victims of serious crime

The DRR service is delivered in partnership with Staffordshire Probation service. The DRR service delivers an assessment and care management approach specifically for people with drug problems who are involved within the Criminal Justice System and who have been placed upon a Court Order to attend individually customised treatment programmes. The offender is required to have treatment to reduce or eliminate his/her dependency on or tendency to misuse drugs and will have to provide samples for drug testing when required. When a drug-misusing offender tests positive for heroin, cocaine or crack, the positive result will not be used to bring a prosecution for unlawful possession or consumption, or to support further police investigation into the offence. However, it will be used in court to aid sentencing.

Staffordshire Probation Area consists of 3 teams; Bucknall Drug Rehabilitation Team (DRT), North Walls DRT and Tamworth DRT. At the end of March 2007 Staffordshire Probation Areas' DRT had a caseload of 266, which represented 6% of probation's total caseload. Of the DRT caseload, 84% of offenders were male and 16% female, compared with a county picture of 89% male and 11% female.

During 2006/07 in Staffordshire County there were 247 DRR commencements and 60 completions, representing a 24.2% satisfactory completion rate. This includes those who completed their order or where the order was revoked for good progress. The unsatisfactory group includes terminations where the order was revoked for failure to comply with requirements, further offence etc. The satisfactory completion figure is historically low for DRRs mainly down to the higher risk offenders being supervised.

The Offender Assessment System (OASys) provides criminogenic profiles and the extent to which factors are linked to offending behaviour. In 2005/06 alcohol had a prevalence rate of 42.3% (1146 out of 2710). In 2006/07 this figure increased to 49% (1479 out of 3019). In 2005/06 drugs had a prevalence rate of 29.6% (803 out of 2710). In 2006/07 this figure increased to 32% (975 out of 3019).

In June 2006, the OASys evaluation team released a national needs profile based on the 7 reducing re-offending pathways: attitudes and thinking/behaviour, health, children and families, drugs and alcohol, accommodation, employment training and finance, benefit and debt. This was based on a national sample of 19,165 assessments and a Staffordshire sample of 5,337 assessments. A combined alcohol and drugs criminogenic need revealed Staffordshire assessments to have a prevalence rate of 63% compared with 60% nationally. Thus drugs and alcohol were a key factor in offending behaviour of almost two-thirds of offenders in Staffordshire.

1.6 Substance Misuse as a factor in Youth Offending (covers both alcohol and drugs)

Whilst there is no evidence of a direct causal link between substance misuse and offending, research commissioned by the Youth Justice Board shows that young people in the Youth Justice system have a high prevalence of substance misuse. Each stage of the Youth Justice system provides an opportunity to identify children and young people who have, or are at risk of developing substance misuse problems, assess their needs and enable them to access the appropriate substance misuse services.¹¹

Staffordshire Youth Offending Service deals with young people that have received statutory court orders or final warnings prior to their 18th birthday. Young Offenders receive an assessment by a Youth Offending Team worker to assess the reasons behind their offending behaviour. A number of factors are assessed and given a score from 0 - 4. These may include accommodation, peer groups, family, qualifications, and attitudes to offending and substance misuse. This is not broken down into drugs and alcohol, but is a generic area. If some of these issues are a problem for the young person and are thought to contribute to their offending behaviour they are scored accordingly.

There are however many caveats around this data:

1. It is a subjective judgment by the assessor. Whilst a young person may drink or take illegal drugs there is no way of knowing the extent to which this contributes to their offending. It may contribute to their offending, but we cannot be sure.
2. Whilst substance misuse may be flagged as a problem, another issue may be the biggest cause of their offending. For example whilst substance misuse may score 3; making it a problem, their offending may have actually been caused by housing; scoring 4.
3. Not all those who have substance misuse identified as a problem are referred onto a service. This means that a further assessment by a drugs worker suggests that it is not problematic.

Drug treatment services are categorised into four tiers of treatment. Only Tiers 2 and 3 are dealt with by the Youth Offending Team (YOT) as Tier 1 is simply a referral and Tier 4 is dealt with by CRI (Crime Reduction Initiatives) because the need is significant and specialist and may involve detoxification and rehabilitation. (See table 8 for a description of the four tiers of drug treatment services for young people. Please note that these tiers differ slightly to adult tiers)

The two main types of Substance Misuse intervention dealt with by the YOT are Early Intervention and Treatment Intervention. Early Intervention is designed to have an impact on knowledge, behaviour or skills that relate to a young persons substance misuse before it became problematic. This is targeted at Tier 2 need and includes harm reduction information. Treatment Intervention is targeted at Tier 3 need and includes a range of interventions provided within the context of a care plan that is focused on addressing the young person's substance misuse.

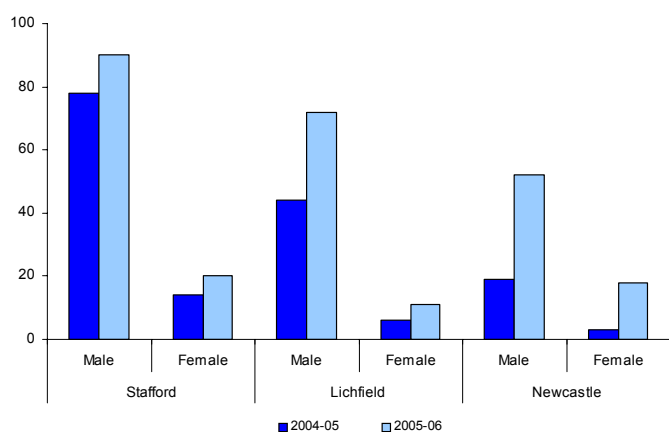
Table 8: The four-tiered model of drug and alcohol interventions for young people¹⁵

| | |
|--------|---|
| Tier 1 | Universal access and continuity of care. Identify and screen those with vulnerability to substance misuse and identify those with difficulties in relation to substances. Education improvement, health maintenance, educational attainment and identification of risks or child protection issues. Embedding advice and information concerning substances, within a general health improvement agenda. |
| Tier 2 | Youth orientated services, offered by practitioners with drug and alcohol experience and youth specialist knowledge. Reduction of risks and vulnerabilities, reintegration and maintenance of young people. |
| Tier 3 | Young people's specialist drug services, which work with complex cases requiring multidisciplinary team-based work. Deal with complex and often multiple needs of the young person and not just the substance problems. Reintegrating and including the child in their family, community, school or place of work. |
| Tier 4 | Very specialist forms of intervention for young drug misusers with complex care needs. For a very small number of people, there is a need for intensive interventions, which could include short-term substitute prescribing, detoxification and rehabilitation. |

In 2005-06, a quarter (25.3%, or 263 out of 1040) of all Staffordshire Youth Offending Service Users had substance misuse flagged as a potential problem. Of these, 230 were on Tier 2 treatment and 31 were on Tier 3. In 2004-05 this figure was 29.4% (165 out of 561), with 154 being on Tier 2 and 11 on Tier 3. Of these offenders, in 2005-06, the majority were white (95.4%) and 4.6% were BME (2.4% mixed race, 1.1% Afro-Caribbean, 0.8% Black and 0.4% Pakistani). Although the BME figures are low, they represent a higher percentage than the general population of BME (3.8%) of which only 0.6% of the population are mixed race compared to 2.3% of these young offenders.

In 2005-06, 81.4% were male and 18.6% female, compared to 86% males and 14% females in 2004-05.

Figure 5: Youth Offending Cases in which offender had substance misuse flagged as problem



It is clear from Figure 5 that all of the 3 Youth Offending teams (which cover the whole of Staffordshire) have seen an increase in substance misuse cases over the last 2 years. The team based in Newcastle has witnessed the most significant increase (218%), rising from 22 to 70 substance misuse cases in 2005-06. The Lichfield team has seen the next biggest increase (33%) rising from 50 in 2004-05 to 83 in 2005-06. The team based in Stafford has increased by 19.8% from 92 in 2004-05 to 110 in 2005-06.

Whilst the percentage of young offenders having substance misuse flagged as a potential problem has decreased by 4.1% over the last 2 years, the numbers have actually increased by 98 offenders, as have the overall number of offenders which have almost doubled, rising from 561 in 2005-06 to 1040 in 2005-06. For this reason it is impossible to say whether substance misuse has actually increased amongst young people or whether it is just the case that more young offenders are being caught.

1.7 Needle Finds

As part of street cleansing in Staffordshire, local authorities will collect syringes and sharp finds from District Council Land when reported. Needle finds may reflect patterns of problematic drug use, with a high number of discarded needles implying a problem with drug misuse in that area. It is probable that discarded needles reported to the authorities represent just a tiny proportion of all needles discarded, with residents of the local community disposing of a high proportion themselves. It may also reflect how consistently this information is recorded by local authorities. Not only do needle finds show the existence of serious drug misuse in an area, they are a warning sign of the existence of drug dealers in that area. Further more they send out a signal to the local community that there is a problem with drugs and can in turn increase fear of crime.

Unfortunately data has not been received from all districts, with only East Staffordshire and Newcastle-under-Lyme providing detailed needle find data, shown in table 9.

Table 9: Needle Finds In Newcastle-Under-Lyme and East Staffordshire

| | 01/04/2004 - 31/03/2005 | 01/04/2005- 31/03/2006 | 01/04/2006- 31/03/2007* |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Newcastle-Under-Lyme | 30 | 242 | 161 |
| East Staffordshire | 480 | 464 | 212 |

*only 11 months worth of data was provided for 2006-07, this has been converted to 12 months to aid comparison

It is clear to see that both districts have seen a significant decrease in Sharps finds in 2006-07 compared to 2005-06, it is unclear whether this is more indicative of improved provision and promotion of Needle Exchange facilities, or a decline in levels of problematic drug use.

There are currently 29 locations across the county providing needle exchange facilities. The highest number of these are in Cannock Chase (8 facilities), followed by Stafford Borough (6), South Staffordshire (5) and Tamworth (4). Lichfield, Staffordshire Moorlands and East Staffordshire each have 2 needle exchange facilities. There are currently no needle exchange facilities in Newcastle-Under-Lyme.

1.8 Community Perceptions of Drug Problems

The Audit Commission capture data for perceptions of drugs problems through its Area Profiles. Staffordshire Residents were questioned in each district to see whether they believe using or dealing drugs in their local area to be a problem.

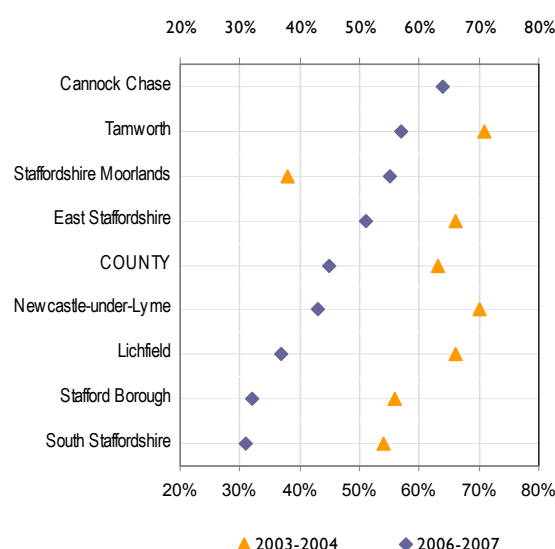
Figure 6 shows the proportion of residents that believe using or dealing drugs in their local area to be a fairly or very big problem in 2003-04 and 2006-07.

It is immediately obvious that the perceptions of drug using or dealing being a problem in Staffordshire County have decreased over the last 3 years (by 18%). All districts have witnessed large decreases, with the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands who had a 17% increase over the last 3 years.

Levels peak in Cannock Chase where nearly two thirds of the population (64%) believe the problem of drug use and dealing in their local area to be a very or fairly big problem. This is in spite of the low numbers of drug trafficking offences in the district; being 2nd lowest in the county, and the number of recorded drug possession offences being just slightly above the county average. Rates in Cannock Chase are followed by Tamworth (57%), where recorded drug trafficking and possession offences are slightly above the county average. Staffordshire Moorlands also have a high proportion of residents believing drug using or dealing is a big problem in their local area, this is despite the fact that they are the lowest in the county for both drug trafficking and possession offences.

Just three areas experienced rates of concerns below the county average; Stafford Borough, South Staffordshire and Lichfield. Of these by far the lowest rates of concern were in South Staffordshire where just 31% of residents surveyed believed drug use or dealing to be a big problem in their local area. This is in total contrast to recorded crime figures, which show that South Staffordshire experienced the highest level of drug possession per 1000 population in the county and the 2nd highest level of drug trafficking in the county. Perceptions of drug use/dealing, like many aspects of the fear of crime, are a complex picture. Whilst the prevalent crime rate related to drugs may affect this, a range of other factors will also influence perceptions, for example Anti-social behaviour.

Figure 6: Proportion of residents who believe people using or dealing drugs is a fairly or very big problem in their local area



Alcohol Misuse and Community Safety in Staffordshire

2.1 Alcohol Related Crime

Alcohol related crime and disorder has a major impact on the quality of life of countless people. It is linked with a wide range of offences ranging from minor public order offences; which are anti-social by nature, traffic offences, minor assaults to serious assaults, particularly in the proximity of licensed premises at closing time. It can also increase the fear of crime and so reduce the quality of life for many people. This is a key priority for CDRPs to utilise the existing powers and support available to tackle this in their local area.

2.1.1 Offenders under the Influence of Alcohol

We can examine the link between Alcohol and crime by breakdown of crime records. When recording a crime, police officers may flag whether the offender is under the influence of alcohol, based on the officer's or victim's perception. As discussed in the drug misuse section, this information gives a useful guide to the prevalence of alcohol related crime but it is a subjective one. The relationship between alcohol and crime is complex and the nature and extent of the association is a matter of continued debate. It is important to remember the following:

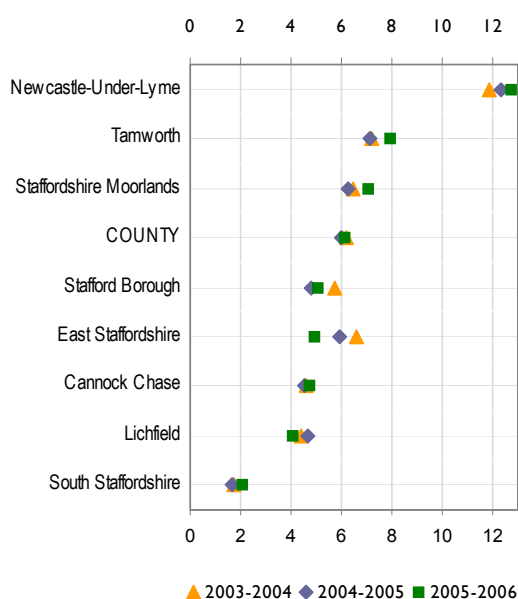
- The observation that the offender is under the influence of alcohol might not be accurate, or may have little bearing on the crime itself.
- If alcohol has been consumed by the offender, we cannot assume that the offence is directly linked to alcohol consumption.
- The reliability of this indicator is also strongly linked to consistency of recording practises by police officers.

It should also be noted that alcohol related crime, particularly violent crime is chronically under-reported, and these figures will therefore give just a portion of the problem.

In Staffordshire in 2005-06 there were 5037 offences recorded where the offender was thought to be under the influence of alcohol. These figures have remained consistent over the last 3 years with just a small 0.5% increase. Based on Staffordshire Police statistics there are 3 main problem areas exhibiting rates higher than the county average (6.2 per 1000 population) in terms of alcohol related crime; Newcastle-Under-Lyme with a rate of 12.7 per 1000 population, Tamworth with 8 per 1000 population and Staffordshire Moorlands with 7.1 per 1000 population. The remainder of Staffordshire experienced rates below the County average, with South Staffordshire exhibiting by far the lowest rate, with just 2.1 per 1000 population.

Figure 7 suggests that offences committed whilst offenders are under the influence of alcohol have remained stable in Staffordshire over the last 3 years, although this is inconsistent across the Districts. Newcastle-Under-Lyme and Tamworth have seen the largest increases in alcohol-related crime (increase of 0.8 per 1000 population), with the largest decrease experienced in East Staffordshire (decrease of 1.7 per 1000 population).

Figure 7: Offences in which the offender is affected by alcohol per 1000 population



By examining the police database we can look closer at what specific crime types are committed by offenders thought to be under the influence of alcohol for the period 2005-06. The largest proportion not surprisingly is violence, accounting for 76% (3826 offences). This is a similar picture for all the CDRPs. The second largest category is criminal damage, currently 15.5% (782 offences) of all offences where the offender was thought to be under the influence of alcohol. According to the British Crime Survey (BCS), 40% of all violent crime; 78% of assaults and 88% of criminal damage cases are committed while the offender is under the influence of alcohol³. Although there is no simple causal relationship, alcohol is often consumed by offenders and victims prior to the offences being committed. Moreover, it is inextricably linked to disorder around licensed premises. In addition, fear of alcohol related violence or intimidation may well mean that large numbers of people avoid city centres on weekend evenings.

The remaining offences where the offender was under the influence of alcohol were for theft or burglary (3.6%) and other crimes including arson, drug trafficking, fraud or forgery, interfere/tamper with Motor Vehicle and other offences (4.9%). It is important to remember that these figures are a snapshot only, as it is not always possible to determine if the offender is under the influence of alcohol. A lot of alcohol fuelled violence may also go unreported due to fear of reprisal.

Alcohol Related Offending is especially linked to the night-time economy in and around pubs and nightclubs. Consequently it is not surprising to see that the majority of these alcohol related crimes (69.1%) occurred between Friday and Sunday (Friday 16.7%, Saturday 29.4%, Sunday 23%). A large proportion of the violence offences are focused in and around the town centres, around the nightclubs and pubs.

The majority of alcohol-related offences tend to be committed by young people. Nine out of ten (92%) of alcohol related offences are committed by people aged under 45. Almost half (48%) of all alcohol-related offences are committed by those aged between 16 and 24. This is in line with national findings.

2.12 Anti-Social Behaviour and Street Drinking

Recorded incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Staffordshire whereby the offender was caught drinking in the street have increased considerably over the last 2 years; from 637 incidents in 2005-06 to 1486 incidents in 2006-07, with all districts seeing dramatic increases. As discussed in section 1.21, the ASB Act helps police and local authorities work together with local people to tackle ASB and protect victims of ASB and the communities most affected by the problems. It has been well publicised in the media in recent years that the government are tackling ASB. This dramatic increase in ASB Street Drinking Incidents is largely due to the fact that people are becoming more aware that the police are tackling street drinking and as a result more and more people are contacting the police to report such incidents.

2.13 Drink Driving Offences

According to the Department of Transport, around 100,000 drivers are convicted every year for drink driving and on average 3000 people are killed or seriously injured each year on Britain's roads in drink driving collisions, accounting for almost one sixth of all road fatalities. A driver is over the legal limit when they have more than 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood. Drinking more than this limit can seriously impact on driving ability. The effects can include the following:

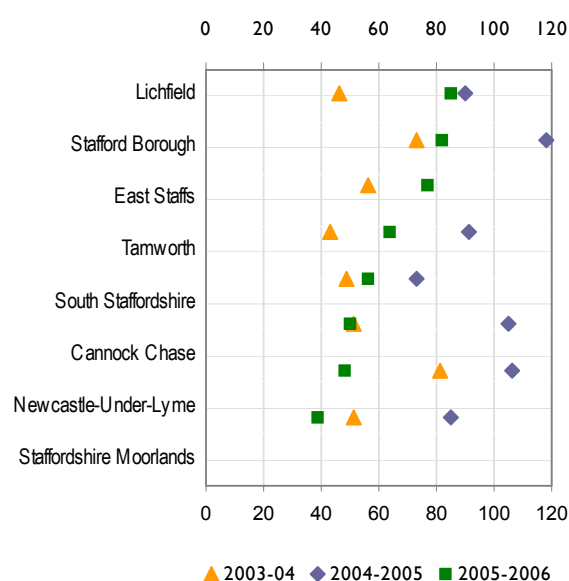
- Slower reactions
- Increased stopping distance
- Poorer judgment of speed and distance
- Reduced field of vision
- Feeling over-confident and more likely to take risks when driving¹²

If convicted of drink driving the offender will have a criminal record and will not be allowed to drive for at least a year. The offenders driving license will be endorsed for 11 years and their insurance costs will be higher.

In Staffordshire drink-driving offences across all districts saw a significant increase from 2003/04 to 2004/05, followed by a fall in 2005/06. A high impact government campaign including graphic television adverts was launched in June 2004. This may have had an impact on the figures. Another similar campaign took place in the summer of 2007.

It is important to remember that the police statistics for the number of drivers who were recorded as being over the legal limit, reflect the District in which the offender was apprehended, not necessarily the area in which they live. Numbers will also depend on Police activity in the area and therefore will not reflect the full extent of drink driving.

Figure 8: Number of Drink Driving Offences by District 2003-2006



2.14 Domestic Violence and Alcohol Misuse

Domestic Violence is defined by the Home Office as “any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse”.¹³

The links between domestic violence and alcohol misuse are extremely complex. The most common links are:

- Women use alcohol as a coping mechanism to deal with the abuse – this has huge Health and Safety implications for refugees and keeps the victim dependant on the perpetrator
- Alcohol is often used by the perpetrator to justify the violence
- Women; who are often also forced into prostitution, are forced to become dependant on alcohol by the perpetrator as a further controlling mechanism
- It can be extremely hard for women to access alcohol services as they are often mixed sex and there is no provision for child care
- Because of a lack of support for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence and have alcohol misuse problems, they tend to become caught in a pattern of repeat homelessness

Research completed by Alcohol Concern has shown that although it is certainly not the only factor, alcohol does play a significant part in domestic abuse. Abuse is often accompanied by violence that can escalate in frequency over time.

Monitoring of Stafford Women’s Aid projects and service users has shown that those women with more enduring substance misuse/mental health problems are not only less likely to access domestic violence services in the first place, but are also less likely to resettle in the community, whether rehoused from the refuge, or via floating or outreach support. They have further identified that this particular vulnerable group of women (and their children) tend to enter a ‘cycle of homelessness’, or become caught in a pattern of repeat homelessness. Their needs are complex and often unmet because the interlinked problems are often dealt with by different agencies who do not always have adequate liaison or communication arrangements.

To try and combat some of these issues Stafford Women’s Aid developed a project called “Breaking the Cycle”. The project offers enhanced support for women at risk of repeat domestic violence/homelessness linked to substance misuse and/or mental health problems and, will measure the best ways of meeting the needs of this highly vulnerable group of women (and their children) in the process of settling and resettling after domestic violence.

Recorded crime statistics provided by Staffordshire Police illustrate that the offender was under the influence of alcohol in just over a quarter (26.5%) of recorded domestic violence incidents in Staffordshire County (1097 incidents out of 4140 in 2005-06). These figures are displayed in table 10. In 2003-04 this figure was slightly higher at 27.2% (1131 incidents out of 4154). Newcastle-under-Lyme exhibit the highest proportion with offenders being under the influence of alcohol in 42% of domestic violence incidents. Staffordshire Moorlands also display a high rate; 40.4% of domestic violence incidents. Districts with the lowest percentage rates are Stafford Borough (18.2%), Cannock Chase (18.9%) and East Staffordshire (19.1%).

Newcastle-Under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands also exhibit the highest percentage rates for domestic violence where the victims were under the influence of alcohol (27.7% and 24.4% respectively). Cannock Chase and South Staffs have the lowest percentage rates (6.9% and 7% respectively).

Table 10: Domestic Violence and Alcohol

| Data for period 2005-2006 | All Domestic Violence Incidents | | Domestic Violence - Offender Under Influence of Alcohol | | Domestic Violence - Victim Under Influence of Alcohol | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | Number of Incidents | per 1000 population | Number of Incidents | % of Domestic Violence | Number of Incidents | % of Domestic Violence |
| Newcastle-Under-Lyme | 757 | 4.3 | 318 | 42.00% | 210 | 27.70% |
| Staffs Moorlands | 386 | 2.3 | 156 | 40.40% | 94 | 24.40% |
| Tamworth | 508 | 6.1 | 122 | 24.00% | 61 | 12.00% |
| Cannock Chase | 625 | 5.9 | 118 | 18.90% | 43 | 6.90% |
| Stafford Borough | 622 | 4 | 113 | 18.20% | 65 | 10.50% |
| East Staffordshire | 491 | 4.2 | 94 | 19.10% | 57 | 11.60% |
| South Staffordshire | 402 | 2.7 | 92 | 22.90% | 28 | 7.00% |
| Lichfield | 349 | 3 | 84 | 24.10% | 45 | 12.90% |
| County | 4140 | 4 | 1097 | 26.50% | 603 | 14.60% |

A great deal of caution is necessary in interpreting these patterns as an indication of the relative prevalence of alcohol misuse surrounding domestic violence. As mentioned in the drug misuse section, Domestic Violence has been highlighted by Staffordshire Police Force as a priority area whereby targets are to increase the reporting of Domestic Violence incidents each year. The aim of this is to encourage victims to come forward and report the offenders and not be afraid. However it is possible for example that many Domestic Violence Incidents; some of which may be affected by or be as a result of alcohol misuse, will go unreported due to the victims being too frightened or embarrassed to report the incidents.

2.2 Substance misuse and fatal fires (covers both alcohol & drugs)

There is no local data available on the role of substance misuse and fatal fires in Staffordshire; however, national research has been carried out elsewhere which can be assumed to be applicable in the local context. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) recently published a research bulletin¹³, which looked at a sample of fatal Fire Investigation Reports. The purpose of the research was to look at how human behaviour and characteristics contribute to the cause of a fire, and a person's ability to raise the alarm, fight or escape once a fire has started.

This national piece of research was carried out by the Arson Control Forum based on 535 fatal Fire Investigation Reports from 27 individual fire and rescue services. The majority (two-thirds) of these reports were received from six metropolitan fire and rescue services, although the remaining third came from non-metropolitan fire and rescue services, so the research does cover both urban and rural areas.

The research was based on around half of all fatal fires that occurred in England between 2002 and 2004. The report examines a range of human behaviour and characteristics in terms of risk. Of particular interest for this report, is substance use and fatal fires.

Table 11 shows that substance use (legal and illegal) was common. There was evidence that in almost half of all fatal fires (46%) the person was under the influence of a substance at the time of the fire. Alcohol was by far the biggest single category of any substance use. In a third of all fatal fires the person was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the fire.

Table 11: Substance use at the time of fire¹³

| Substance Use | Number | % |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|
| Alcohol | 178 | 33% |
| Prescribed drugs | 65 | 12% |
| Illicit drugs - not specified | 5 | 1% |
| Non-illegal substance (glue) | 1 | - |
| Class A | 1 | - |
| Class C | 1 | - |
| All Substance Misuse | 251 | 46% |

Further research identified that alcohol use was often associated with fires at weekends and during the night. Substance use was strongly associated with 50-59 year olds, but was less common among the elderly. Table 12 shows that alcohol was the most common type of impairment both as a cause of the fire and as a factor affecting the response to the fire. In both cases, impairment through alcohol was a factor in around a quarter of all fatal fires. This was a much higher proportion than any other type of impairment.

Table 12: Impairment as a contribution to fire and as a factor effecting response¹⁴

| | As a cause of the fire | | As a factor affecting response to the fire | |
|--|------------------------|-----|--|-----|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Alcohol | 135 | 25% | 137 | 26% |
| Mobility inc.bedridden/wheelchair use | 44 | 8% | 80 | 15% |
| Depression/other menal illness | 31 | 6% | 30 | 6% |
| Prescribed drugs | 24 | 4% | 33 | 6% |
| Age related physical impairment | 30 | 6% | 22 | 4% |
| Neurological impairment leading to unconsciousness | 12 | 2% | 13 | 2% |
| Age related mental illness | 12 | 2% | 6 | 1% |
| Visual | 6 | 1% | 5 | 1% |
| Oxygen dependancy | 3 | 1% | 2 | - |
| Illicit drugs - all | 3 | - | 5 | 1% |
| Hearing | 2 | - | 3 | 1% |
| Learning difficulties | 0 | - | 5 | 1% |

The report concludes that:

Overall, nearly 80% of all fatal fires involved victims who were impaired in some way, either through substance use, mental or physical impairment, whether or not related to age, or a combination of these factors.

A closer examination of reports sheds light on where the 'impairment' was directly related to either the fire starting (e.g. cigarettes not extinguished due to alcohol-induced sleep, chip pan unattended for the same reason) and/or impeded effective response. Alongside the main cause of a fire (e.g. carelessly discarded cigarettes), alcohol, mobility and mental illness are the biggest single influences on whether a fire starts and/or whether it has fatal consequences.

2.3 Alcohol as a Criminogenic Factor in Offending

As discussed in section 1.53 (Drug Rehabilitation Requirement Service (DRR)), Staffordshire Probation is committed to:¹⁰

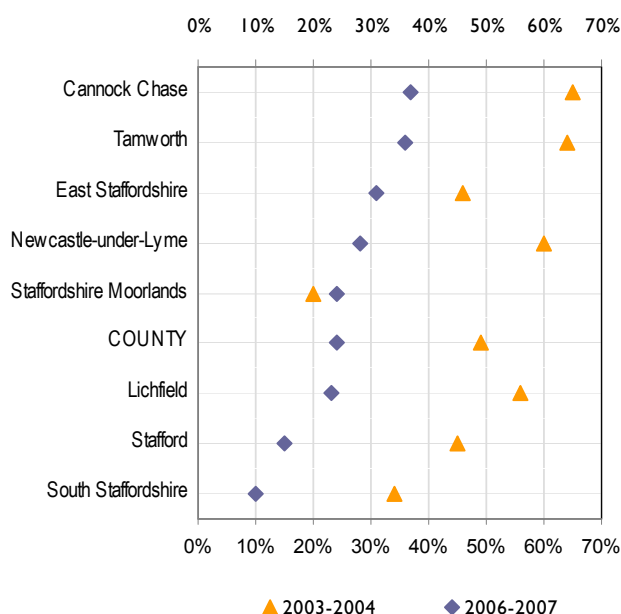
- Ensure offenders complete their sentence in the community and take them back to court if not
- Provide information to Staffordshire courts to help sentencing
- Safely supervise people serving their sentence in the community
- Prepare prisoners for release and supervise them on license afterwards
- Liase with victims of serious crime

The Offender Assessment System (OASys) provides criminogenic profiles and the extent to which factors are linked to offending behaviour. In 2005/06 alcohol had a prevalence rate of 42.3% (1146 out of 2710). In 2006/07 this figure increased to 49% (1479 out of 3019). In 2005/06 drugs had a prevalence rate of 29.6% (803 out of 2710). In 2006/07 this figure increased to 32% (975 out of 3019).

2.4 Community Perceptions of Alcohol Problems

An important element of alcohol-related crime is the consequential fear of crime and disorder experienced by communities. Data from the Audit Commission area profiles enable us to see local perceptions of people being rowdy or drunk in public places in their local area. Figure 9 shows the proportion of residents who think that people being rowdy or drunk in public places is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area in 2003-04 and 2006-07.

Figure 9: Proportion of residents who think that people being rowdy or drunk in public places is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area



It is instantly evident that the perceptions of people being rowdy or drunk in public places in Staffordshire County have decreased over the last 3 years (by 25%). All districts have witnessed large decreases, with the exception of Staffordshire Moorlands who had a 4% increase over the last 3 years.

As with the perceptions of drug using and dealing discussed in the drug misuse section, levels of residents who think people being rowdy or drunk in public places is a big problem in their area, peak in Cannock Chase, where 37% of those surveyed believed it to be a very big or fairly big problem in their local area. This is in spite of the low rates of alcohol related crime recorded there. Rates in Cannock Chase are followed by Tamworth (36%), where recorded

offences in which the offender is affected by alcohol is the 2nd highest rate in the county. In addition Tamworth has the highest rate for ASB street drinking in the County (3.05 per 1000 population compared to a county average of 1.82 per 1000 population). East Staffordshire and Newcastle-Under-Lyme also have a higher proportion than the county average (24%), of residents believing being rowdy or drunk in public places to be a big problem in their area; 31% and 28% respectively. This is despite both districts having lower rates than the county average of ASB street drinking. Newcastle-Under-Lyme does however have the highest rate in the county for offences in which the offender is affected by alcohol.

The two districts experiencing by far the lowest rates of concerns are South Staffordshire and Stafford Borough; 10% and 15% respectively. For South Staffordshire this is in line with the alcohol-related offences and ASB Street drinking whereby they had the lowest rate in the County for both. Stafford Borough also had rates below the county average for both alcohol related offences and ASB Street drinking.

It is important to remember that perceptions and fear of crime are likely to be based on experiences over the previous couple of years and may lag behind the real time picture in the local communities.

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