

These Home Office Findings show that arrest referral schemes effectively target prolific problem drug using offenders and significantly reduced their level of re-offending. The evidence suggests that two thirds of heroin and crack cocaine users were arrested less often in the six months after seeing an arrest referral worker than in the six months before.

Title: Arrest referral: emerging findings from the national monitoring and evaluation programme - DPAS Paper 18 DPAS/ P18

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[Arrest referral: emerging findings from the national monitoring and evaluation programme](#) summarises early evaluation evidence from arrest referral schemes. These schemes use the point of arrest as an early opportunity to offer access to treatment for offenders. Most arrest referral schemes started in April 2000 and the evaluation will finish in spring 2003.

Arrest referral workers screened about 49,000 individuals in England and Wales between October 2000 and September 2001. More than half of them were voluntarily referred to a specialist drug treatment service. Of those referred, a quarter (5,500 individuals) entered treatment.

The research identifies significant reductions in offending and in the proportions of offenders using heroin and/or crack cocaine. There were also significant improvements in physical and psychological health.

It did however identify that problem drug-using offenders who were referred by an arrest referral scheme were more likely to drop out of treatment compared to self or GP referred drug users.

The research also identified some key groups that did not engage fully with treatment services, including black and Asian problem drug-using offenders, older heroin and crack users, young, male crack-using street robbers and female crack-using sex workers.

Two other research reports, published on the same day by the Home Office, highlight ways in which more women and minority ethnic drug users may be encouraged to access drug services - [Delivering Drug Services to Black and Minority Ethnic Communities](#) and [Women Drug Users and Drugs Service Provision](#).

The reports identify barriers faced by women and minority ethnic drug users seeking treatment, highlight innovative practice around the country, and make a series of recommendations for future policy and practice.

As well as examining numbers using drugs and entering treatment, the reports outline reasons why women and minority ethnic drug users do not access drug treatment services. These reasons include:

- Fears about being stigmatised as a drug addict by one's local community or as a drug-using mother.
- Concerns about childcare and child protection issues.
- An emphasis by treatment services on injecting heroin users to the detriment of other forms of drug misuse found among some users from minority ethnic communities seeking help, including the smoking of heroin and stimulant use.

The research suggests that women's access to drug services could be improved through greater outreach work to engage groups such as prostitutes and mothers unable to attend services. Women drug users tend to have multiple problems and the research highlights the need for better joint working between agencies and the creation of new local services.

The research also recommends a more 'culturally competent' approach by drug services towards minority ethnic communities. In addition to appointing minority ethnic staff and managers, this includes providing services that go beyond medical treatments, and which break away from a heavy focus on opiate injectors.

Getting a copy

All the research is available from the website www.drugs.gov.uk.

Alternatively click on the title to follow the direct link:

[Arrest referral: emerging findings from the national monitoring and evaluation programme](#)