

Forward Research and Policy Series

No.3 A successful approach to tackling drug-related crime



May 2015

forward

Foreword

This series of RAPt Research and Policy Briefings aims to synthesise over 20 years of practical experience, combined with data and analysis from our in-house research team, to improve our understanding of how to effectively tackle drug and/or alcohol related crime. We hold an in-depth database of more than 6,000 drug or alcohol dependent offenders who have engaged with our accredited programmes. We will use this evidence base to produce regular practice and policy briefings.

Briefing 3

This research and policy briefing reminds us of a few key findings from RAPt's research and experience:

- That successful treatment of drug and alcohol dependence is key to any strategy to reduce crime.
- That there is a significant variation in outcomes from different forms of intervention that aim to promote drug and alcohol recovery and reduce crime.
- That the best performing interventions have the potential to make a real difference to re-offending rates, but:
- That the current policy and commissioning arrangements do not ensure that the available resources are directed at the most successful programmes.



Introduction

A recent Home Office study¹ has confirmed what many in the drug treatment sector have long thought – that the reductions in crime experienced over the last 10 years in the UK were to a significant degree associated with the drive to get a high proportion of drug dependent offenders into treatment. Effectively identifying, motivating and treating drug dependent and prolific offenders is therefore one of the main weapons we have in the struggle to reduce re-offending.

RAPt is the biggest and most experienced provider of treatment for drug and alcohol dependent prisoners. Committed to an evidence-based approach in everything we do, RAPt has been tracking an ever-growing cohort of prisoners who complete our treatment programmes since 2006 to see whether this treatment reduces their re-offending on release. This short paper presents our latest findings.

The programme

Our Substance Dependence Treatment Programme (SDTP) is an intensive, full-time programme for prisoners which is delivered in prisons for between 16 and 21 weeks. The SDTP combines evidence based approaches to treatment: it begins with Motivational Enhancement Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy skills training and is then followed by completion of steps 1-5 of NA/AAs 12-Steps. It also includes Group Therapy and individual counselling throughout. The programme ends with the development of comprehensive care planning and referral to throughcare services. Programme graduates play a key role in the delivery of the programme, as volunteer 'Peer Supporters', and, eventually, some progress to become Apprentices or paid staff.

The Forward PNC study

This study compares the re-offending outcomes of three groups of released prisoners: those who completed the RAPt programme; those who started the programme but failed to complete; and a comparison group of completers of a different and lower intensity prison treatment programme (the standard prison service intervention at the time, known as the "Short Duration Programme").

Re-offending is measured by the official records held on the Police National Computer and was available for 987 men released from prison between April 2007 and March 2010².

We have worked with independent reviewers at the University of Manchester and the University of Western Carolina to verify our data and methodology, and have published our results and methodology in a peer-reviewed journal, the Journal of Substance Use³.

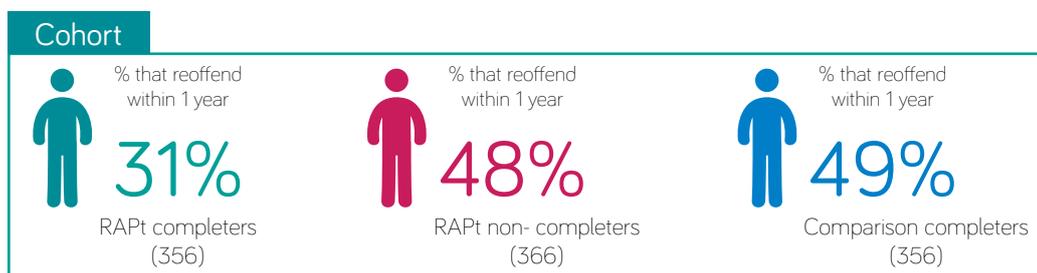


The outcomes

Analysis of the data found that those who complete the Forward programme significantly reduce their re-offending compared to the other groups, in terms of how many re-offend in the year following release from prison, the number of offences committed by those who did re-offend, and the seriousness of these offences.

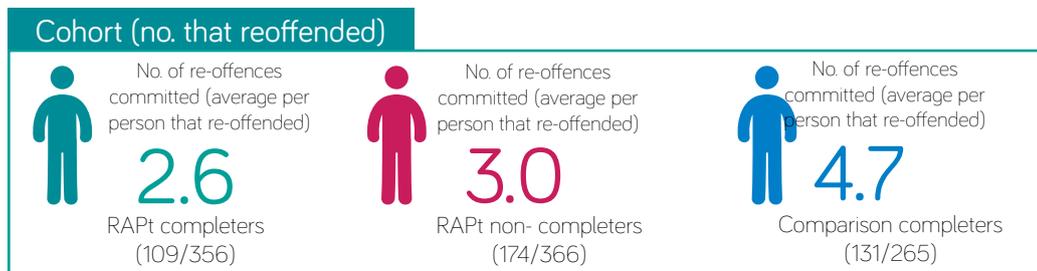
Reduction in the numbers who re-offend

Far fewer of those who completed the Forward programme were re-convicted, with re-offending rates being cut by 18 percentage points below the rate of the comparison group:



Reduction in the number of crimes committed

Not only did fewer of those who completed the Forward programme re-offend, but those who did re-offend committed fewer offences within the 1 year follow-up. Of those that did re-offend, the Forward completers committed far fewer re-offences on average per person than the non-completers and the comparison cohort:



Reduction in the seriousness of crimes committed

Our final finding is that those who completed the Forward programme and did re-offend, committed less serious offences. Analysis of offence types showed that the Forward completers were more likely to have been re-arrested and sentenced for minor offences, such as road traffic offences. Supporting this analysis, a smaller proportion of this group received a custodial sentence for their new offence(s) compared to the other two groups:



We recently analysed a complete breakdown of the types of offence committed in the first year of release by those who completed the RAPt programme, and the comparison group, and found that our programme graduates committed less in almost every category of offence. For example, in addition to committing many fewer crimes (262 per 100 compared to 469), those who completed the RAPt programme committed violent offences at less than half (43%) the rate of the comparison group.

Reductions in criminogenic risk factors

In addition to our PNC study, RAPt has an internal database that evaluates changes in pre- to post-programme indicators of risk of re-offending and drug and alcohol relapse, using the standard psychometric measures adopted by the Ministry of Justice. We collect this data for all participants of our programmes and a recent analysis of over 5,000 programme completers found significant improvements on all four measures of risk following treatment.

These include:

- Improvements in problem solving skills and impulsivity (by 12%);
- Attitudes towards crime (by 13%);
- Confidence in ability to avoid relapse (by 27%); and
- Motivation for change (69% progressed to the 'action' stage of change).

All of these factors are linked to relapse and/or re-offending risk. The PNC study and our analysis of the psychometric measures both demonstrate a significant impact on reducing the likelihood of re-offending.



Conclusion and policy Implications

All of our analysis produces a clear picture – those who complete the RAPt prison drug treatment programme are significantly less likely to re-offend on release; if they do re-offend, are likely commit fewer crimes, and those crimes are likely to be of a less serious nature. There are thousands fewer victims of crime every year as a direct result of RAPt's prison drug treatment programmes.

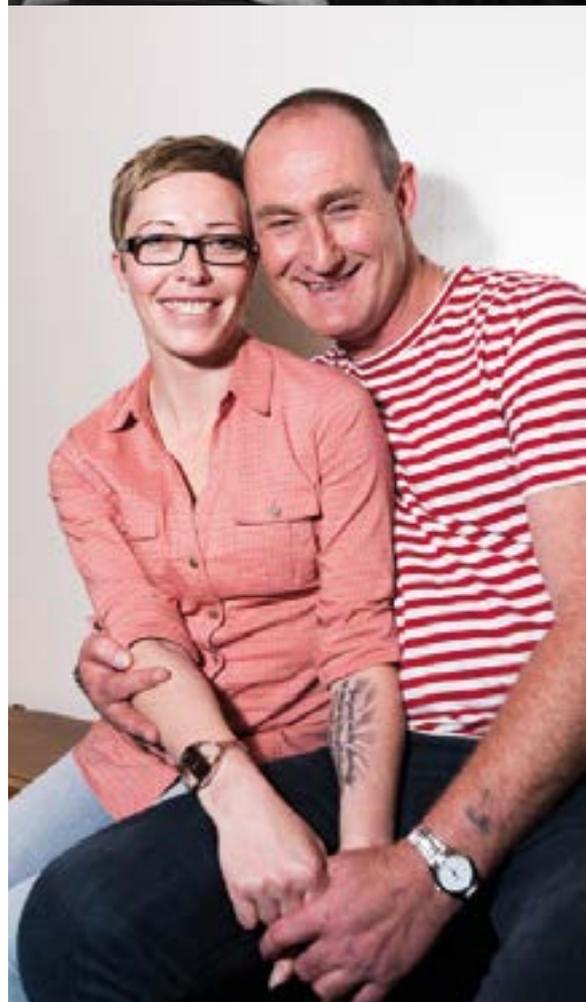
The headline figure of an 18 percentage point reduction in re-offending represents one of the best published results of any UK intervention that aims to reduce re-offending. When consideration of levels and seriousness of offending are taken into account, it is clear that RAPt's programme is one of the most potent interventions for reducing re-offending available to commissioners and policy makers.

During the period covered by this research (2005-2010), the RAPt programme was available in 13 prisons, to around 1,000 prisoners per year. Meanwhile, the Short Duration Programme (that produced significantly worse results in our study), and a similar learning skills based model called (P)ASRO, were strongly promoted throughout this period, and were centrally funded and delivered in most prisons across the country, at an estimated cost of over £100 million. Once this central support was removed in 2012, these learning skills programmes for drug or alcohol dependent prisoners have almost all been quietly closed down, with no formal evaluation of their results being published.

Meanwhile, many years after the publication of our research proving the effectiveness of the RAPt programmes in reducing re-offending, they are available to fewer prisoners in 2015 than in 2010, meeting less than 2%4 of the estimated need.

Instead of expanding access to this proven intervention, we are struggling to maintain current service levels in the face of prison regime pressures and changes to commissioning priorities. Two of our programmes have closed down in the last 12 months, and many more are under threat.

If policy makers and commissioners are serious about reducing re-offending amongst prisoners and other offenders, they have to shape funding and commissioning priorities to ensure the most effective interventions are expanded.



References

¹Morgan, N. (2014) The heroin epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s and its effect on crime trends – then and now: Technical report. Home Office.

²A small number of individuals were released outside this time period.

³Kopak, A. M., Dean, L. V., Proctor, S. L., Miller, L., and Hoffmann, N. G. (2014). Effectiveness of the rehabilitation for addicted prisoners trust (RAPt) programme. *Journal of Substance Use*, Early online: <http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.3109/14659891.2014.904938>

⁴There are an estimated 54,000 new prisoners every year who are drug or alcohol dependent, and who would benefit from such an intervention. These figures based on: The Home Affairs Committee (2012) *Drugs: Breaking the cycle* report which states that 51% prisoners report drug dependency and the latest Offender Management Statistics show that 107,046 different individuals were received into prison in the year to 31 March 2014.



About Forward

Forward works to help people with drug and alcohol dependence, both in prison and in the community, overcome the grip of addiction and lead positive lives, free from drugs and crime.

In 1992 Forward (formerly RAPt) founded the first drug treatment facility in a UK prison. Today we are the leading provider of intensive, abstinence-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes in UK prisons, providing high-quality drug and alcohol services to over 20,000 people every year within the criminal justice system and in the community.



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