

Thematic Briefing

Substance Misuse - Drugs

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1.0 Background / Context

1.1 Lincolnshire Police and Strategic Partners recognise the harm that illicit drugs can have on individuals, families and communities and the dangers of an unregulated market. Drugs are a significant driver of serious crime, anti-social behaviour, health inequalities and exploitation in our county. The cost to society and the public purse is enormous, considering the long-term health harms to individuals and drug related deaths, the damage it causes to families, the cost of drug related crime, the damage to communities and the serious harm it causes to those most at risk in society including children and vulnerable adults.

1.2 In order to gain an improved understanding of the impact of drugs on our communities Lincolnshire Police undertook a bespoke piece of analytical work, drawing on data across all partners, to produce the first Drugs Market Profile.

1.3 The Drugs Market Profile and National Statistics serve to highlight the huge scale of drug misuse in the UK and in Lincolnshire:

- An estimated 3.2 million adults aged between 16 and 59 years used drugs in the last year, 1.1 million of those were Class A users.
- One in five adults aged 16 to 24 years used drugs in the last year. This equates to 1.3 million users.
- Nationally, we are seeing the highest level of drugs related deaths since records began.
- More people die each year as a result of drugs misuse than from all knife crime and road traffic incidents combined.
- It is estimated that the illicit drugs market costs £20 billion annually. Aside from the financial costs, there are societal costs including homelessness, unemployment, and rough sleeping.
- 46 percent of acquisitive crime and 50 percent of homicides are linked to drugs.
- Over a third of people who are serving custodial sentences are in prison for drug related matters. They predominantly serve short sentences and are highly likely to reoffend.
- In Lincolnshire there is a significant demand for illicit drugs with an estimated figure of 40,809 users aged between 16-59 years old.
- All drugs are used in Lincolnshire but Cannabis is the most widely used drug.
- Drug use is seen in all areas of our county, but the hotspots are mainly in Lincoln, Boston, Skegness, and Grantham.

- It is estimated that up to 4,888kg of heroin and 1,027kg of crack cocaine would be required to meet current dependency demand in Lincolnshire with a total estimated street value of £428,592,321 per year.

1.4 The Drugs Market Profile resulted in the formation of the Drugs Strategy Board and the Drugs Tactical Delivery group. These meetings were attended by all strategic partners.

1.5 Lincolnshire Police and partners are now collaboratively working to deliver against a new county strategy which is aligned to the governments 'From Harm to Hope' 10 Year plan which is focused on reducing crime and saving lives.

1.6 The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership have now formally identified Substance Misuse as a strategic priority and a core priority group in being established.

2.0 Developments over last 6-12 months

2.1 As a result of the work undertaken to understand the Drugs Market in Lincolnshire, a delivery plan has been introduced which identifies strategic leads across all partners for multiple drug related projects.

2.2 As a result of the partnership work undertaken to understand the Drugs Market Profile and the drive to deliver on the Governments 10 year drugs plan, Lincolnshire Public Health received £737,000 from the Department for Health to support drug treatment work.

2.3 This significant sum will bring benefit across all partnerships in providing the staffing and capabilities to provide treatment services and therefore divert drug users away from offending.

2.4 The additional funding has allowed for the recruitment of many significant posts. These include:

- A Drug Related Death Coordinator – This role will review all drugs deaths and near miss events to provide engagement, identify themes and share lessons across all partners. This will involve significant engagement across all partners and analysis of data sets.

- A Naloxone Coordinator – Naloxone is now being issued widely across Police, Partners and Service Users which provides an opportunity to save the lives of any person overdosing from opiates. To date over 50 Police officers have volunteered to carry Naloxone.
- Substance Misuse Workers, Youth Workers, Seven Criminal Justice Workers, Mental Health Workers, Hospital Liaison and a Psychotherapist have all been recruited to provide the treatment and diversion service so desperately needed to move users away from drugs.

2.5 Within Lincolnshire Police specifically a significant change will be Drug Testing on Arrest (DTOA). DTOA has been in existence since 2003 and currently operates in many forces in England and Wales. A positive drug test for heroin, crack or cocaine use is a valuable gateway to ensure the offender can access treatment and other support to tackle their drug-related offending.

2.6 DTOA will be a highly successful tool for local areas to identify drug misusing offenders to address their behaviour and to reduce crime. The real added value of testing on arrest is the intervention that happens following a positive drug test result. In those areas operating DTOA, around two-thirds of those participating continue with treatment.

2.7 Those testing positive, are required by law to undergo an assessment of their drug misuse, leading to treatment and other support where appropriate. Failure to take a drug test (without good cause) is a criminal offence.

2.8 Home Office and OPCC Funding has been received which has covered the cost of training, and purchase of the equipment.

2.9 An order has also been placed for a Bruker drugs identification device. This device will allow police to test drugs whilst suspects are in custody with a view to being able to immediately identify a process option. The benefit will come from being able to move a suspect into treatment or the criminal justice process at the earliest opportunity.

2.10 Lincolnshire Police continue to be proactive in pursuing those offenders who profit from drugs supply and have had many notable successes in the last 12 months. The outstanding Lincolnshire Police investigation from last year was Operation Merlin. This was established to

gain an accurate understanding of the drugs market in Lincoln, to identify active County Lines and Organised Crime Groups operating in the city and to take enforcement against them.

- 2.11 Enforcement over six full weeks resulted in the arrest of multiple gang members and searching numerous properties. 54 suspects were charged and remanded and with the case being so strong, the vast majority of gang members pleaded guilty to all offences.
- 2.12 In addition to arrests over £250,000 in potential assets were seized in addition to a large quantity of drugs being recovered. To date the offenders have received over 63 years of custodial sentencing.
- 2.13 The East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) continue to support Lincolnshire Police in investigating matters of the highest threat, risk and harm impacting across the force and region. In May, an operation resulted in 10 people being jailed for more than 30 years for crack cocaine and cannabis dealing in Gainsborough.

3.0 Current Position / Performance (where applicable)

- 3.1 Drugs and County Lines is a priority on the Force Control Strategy and is aligned to the regional strategic priorities.
- 3.2 Within force, Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and County Lines are identified and scored using a risk assessment matrix and mapped using a national tracker, in line with national requirements. Management plans are developed to deal with those which carry most harm.
- 3.3 In the 12 months to July 2022 Lincolnshire Police have seen a reduction in both drugs possession and trafficking. Drug possession has reduced by 12.09% which equates to 142 fewer offences and Drug trafficking has reduced by 42.31% which equates to 223 fewer offences.
- 3.4 Our approach to reducing offending is our focus on more serious and complex offending with a view to bringing those to justice who cause the most harm, whilst also focusing on diverting users away from drug use and into treatment.

3.5 Lincolnshire Police Economic Crime Unit continue to target the assets of any person profiting from criminal matters including drugs. In 2021/22, specifically in relation to drugs, Confiscation Orders made by the courts totalled £846,663, Cash Detentions and Account Freezing Orders totalled £83,777 and Deprivation Orders courts have forfeited under the Misuse of Drugs Act totalled £46,150.

4.0 Forward look 6-12 months

4.1 As we move forward over the next 6 to 12 months we will see a significant change in the way the police and partners deal with substance misuse. The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Substance Misuse Core Priority Group will become embedded resulting in a new countywide strategy and delivery plan. The new governance will provide increased partnership engagement and accountability for delivering the strategy.

4.2 The Drugs Death and Near Miss Coordinator will be embedded and begin to draw together all partner data to identify and protect persons or groups at risk of harm from substance misuse.

4.3 Drug Testing on Arrest will be introduced into Custody areas in Lincolnshire. This will allow the Police to identify drug users and use statutory powers to divert those into early treatment and move people away from drug related offending.

4.4 Bruker devices will be embedded which will result in the early identification of drugs. This will enable officers to reach disposal decisions at an early stage and therefore move users into treatment and diversion at the earliest opportunity.

5.0 Issues of Exception – Opportunities / Risks

5.1 The release of the Governments 10 year plan brings opportunity for further funding streams and Lincolnshire Police are currently reviewing opportunities.

5.2 A government White Paper has been released which proposes broadening the range of offences which automatically trigger Drug Testing on Arrest. Testing for matters such as Domestic Abuse and Assaults provide an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of

offender drivers and motives and support strategic local and national priorities including Violence Against Women and Girls.

- 5.3 As we conduct more referral activity into treatment services the existing funding will need to be maintained to manage the demand. Having an effective treatment and diversion provision is essential to moving users away from drug use and associated offending.

6.0 Key Public Messages

- 6.1 Drugs and County Lines are a priority for Lincolnshire Police and we are aligned to the Government's 10 years strategy. Lincolnshire has a market profile, countywide strategy, partnership delivery plan, drug testing on arrest and Naloxone issue to officers in place.
- 6.2 A whole system approach to substance misuse is now well embedded across the county with all partners engaged in the process.