

Cranstoun arrest referral service (CARS)

A service providing statutory and voluntary drug testing, assessment and referrals in a custody setting.

First published

5 August 2024

Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Reoffending
Topic	Drugs and alcohol Offender management Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	West Midlands Police
Contact	Nicola Perkins
Email address	nicola.perkins@westmidlands.police.uk
Region	West Midlands
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2020
Scale of initiative	Local

Aim

The aims of Cranstoun arrest referral service (CARS) are to:

- conduct full lifestyle assessments including statutory drug testing while in custody
- improve pathways to treatment, including providing harm reduction supplies including Naloxone on release from custody
- improve screening for additional vulnerabilities, including mental health, sex work and domestic abuse
- improve the understanding of the impact of alcohol and other drug use on crime
- improve the effectiveness of community sentencing measures

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the CARS are to:

- reduce reoffending
- improve the health outcomes for offenders

Description

Several individuals who engage with the police are using alcohol and drugs, which for many is a determining factor in the offences they commit. It is likely that many of these individuals are not receiving support they want or need to tackle their use of alcohol and other drugs.

Working in partnership with the commissioned service Cranstoun, alcohol and other drugs workers are situated within police custody blocks and courts, offering assessments to all detainees. This approach ensures support can be offered to those who wouldn't be drug-tested on arrival, or who use alcohol and drugs problematically but produce a negative test.

CARS is a standalone commissioned arrest referral service that is delivered in the West Midlands, covering all seven independent boroughs and local authorities. Cranstoun provide the arrest referral workers in all six custody blocks throughout the region, as well as court duty workers in all of the courts.

CARS offers a consistent specialist service across the whole of West Midlands. Traditional arrest referral services are usually delivered by local authority areas to their own residents; however, CARS addresses the challenge of offenders coming from different areas, ensuring consistency in service.

All courts are covered by Cranstoun staff from Monday to Friday. Equally, all custody blocks have staff on site completing mandatory Drug Testing on Arrests (DToA) assessments, and voluntary assessments from 7am-8pm Monday to Friday, as well as the three higher activity blocks having full weekend cover.

Any time staff are not an-site for a positive DToA, an out of hours appointment is booked by police on a simple electronic booking system. This integrated approach enables the specialist staff and management to support each other to cover all custody blocks and courts, saving on resources. Regardless of where an individual lives or if they have not had a previous engaged with services, each person is seen, assessed and offered a treatment plan.

Assessments can include a test for suitability or community sentencing treatment requirements (CSTRs) at court, drug rehabilitation requirement (DRR) and alcohol treatment required (ATR). Completing the assessment in custody instead of court significantly saves time and processing. It also means the offender does not go through the trauma of another assessment within a short period of time. This approach has significantly increased the use of CSTRs within West Midlands.

Evaluation

CARS has not been formally evaluated but the results are monitored through the West Midlands Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (WMOPCC) as part of the contract for commissioned services.

The following are the key performance indicators (KPIs) monitored through the WMOPCC:

- the number of voluntary needs assessments
- the number of required assessments requested and completed
- the number of suitability assessments requested and completed
- the number of suitability assessments completed
- the number of adjournments for suitability assessments
- the number of assessed as suitable for DRR and or ATR
- the number of DRR and ATR assigned
- the number of referrals made into mainstream treatment
- the number of entries made into mainstream treatment
- reasons for referrals not converting to entry
- the number of cases closed

Overall impact

The following results are for 2022/23:

- 16,599 individuals engaged with contact only, test on arrest or voluntary assessments.
- 4,521 (27.2%) of individuals brought into custody completed assessments.
- This consisted of:
 - 2,839 statutory assessment (test on arrest / required assessments)
 - 1,682 voluntary assessments and court mandated assessments
- 1,828 individuals transferred to local drug treatment providers, with a total 4,806 since the contract began in January 2020.
- Court orders granted:
 - 226 (21%) of individuals deemed suitable were granted DRR
 - 135 (32%) of individuals deemed suitable were granted ATR

Learning

- Preparation before implementation is essential to allow for force wide consultation, with a clear understanding of the commissioning of required external services, briefing to staff and training for those involved.
- Challenging inappropriate attitudes which may not be supportive of such schemes.
- Developing and delivering an induction package to new starters.
- Developing and delivering a training video which has been well received by staff.
- Identifying important individuals are drug tested and assessed upon arrival in custody.
- Delivering a service from one provider has ensured consistency in service and addressed the challenge of offenders coming from different areas and different commissioning arrangements.