

alcohol arrest referral scheme

The link between alcohol and offending is well established. The purpose of the Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme is to give people who have been arrested in circumstances where alcohol has been a factor a chance to look at the links between their own drinking and offending.

The AARS, a partnership between GDAS and the Gloucestershire Constabulary, went live in 1999. The scheme, the first of its type in the country, is not cell based and aims to minimise additional work for Custody Staff.



Initial research prior to the scheme -----

Prior to the start of the scheme, the impact of alcohol related offending although apparent to all agencies working within the Criminal Justice system, had (apart from limited national statistics) been supported mainly by anecdotal evidence. To provide a more accurate assessment of what was happening locally, research was undertaken for a month in the Cheltenham Custody Suite.

For people arrested during June 1998, in addition to the normal custody records, two additional pieces of information were obtained:

- had the person arrested been drinking
- if so was it a factor in the offence

Research results

Of the 520 prisoners processed 35% had been drinking and alcohol had been a contributory factor in the offence.

The majority of the offences fell into the following categories:

- Drink/drive 37%
- Public Order 29%
- Violent Crime 23%

Age Ranges:

- 31% of these were in the 11-20 age range
- 33% of these were in the 21-30 age range
- 21% of these were in the 31-40 age range

How the scheme works -----

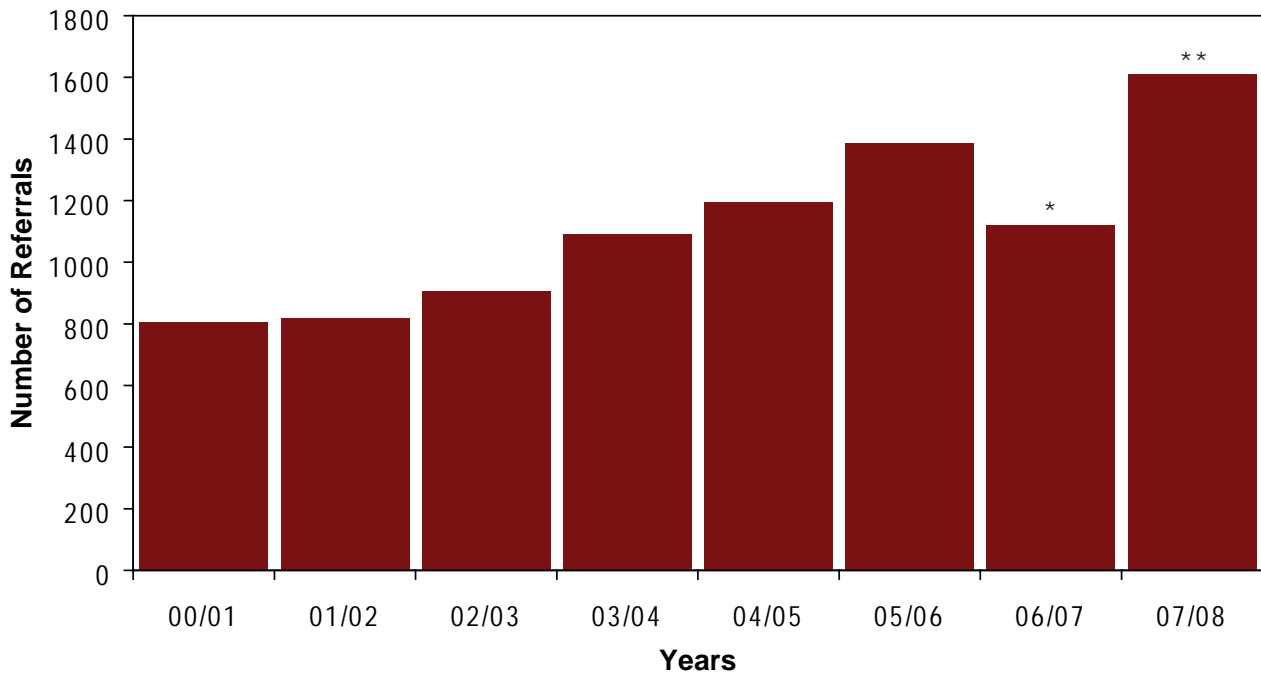
Custody Staff consider the questions as per the initial research, had the person arrested been drinking and was it a factor in the offence, if so they can be referred under the scheme. Referrals to GDAS are made by fax and once this has been sent there is no further action required by the Custody Staff. The onus rests with the person referred to contact GDAS and arrange the sessions, which take place on GDAS premises. The referral can be a condition of bail if the Custody Staff believe it to be necessary to prevent the likelihood of re-offending. Letters are sent to the Courts giving details of a person's attendance or non-attendance.

The sessions include:

- Information about alcohol.
- Review of current drinking.
- Ways of avoiding future high-risk situations.
- Links between alcohol and crime.
- Review education, employment and housing needs and where appropriate provide information about relevant organisations.
- Referral to other organisations – this can include treatment.

Referral Statistics

Referrals to the Scheme



* The introduction of Penalty Notices for Disorder had a negative effect on the number of referrals being made during the last financial year. This has been addressed and the number of referrals has returned to previous levels.

** Projected total from 10 months' figures.

Details of Referrals

During the life of the scheme, the following statistics have remained reasonably static.

- **70%** of referrals are as a condition of bail
- Main Offence Types:
 - drink/drive **38%**
 - drunk & disorderly **9%**
 - criminal damage **10%**
 - assault **19%**
- **6%** of referrals under 18
- **85%** male 15% female
- **16%** involved in domestic violence either as a victim or a perpetrator
- Youngest person referred **13** and the oldest **76**

Information from Assessments

	Adults (18+)	Young People (under 18)
Drinking levels - Risky*	37%	40%
Drinking levels - Harmful ⁺	28%	27%
Previous alcohol related offences	49%	55%
Problems with housing	18%	18%
History of drug use	24%	32%
In full-time education	4%	35%
Unemployed	31%	29% [#]

* 'Risky' use is defined as 21-50 units per week for men, or 14-35 units per week for women.

+ 'Harmful' use is defined as 50+ units per week for men, or 35+ units per week for women.

The unemployed percentage for young people refers to those neither in full-time education or employment.

Performance targets

The scheme was included in the Gloucestershire LPSA for the period 1st April 03 to 31st March 06 with the following stretch targets:

- 2195 attend during the three year period.
- 12% of those attending remain with GDAS to work longer term with their alcohol issues.
- An attendance rate of 75%.
- 80% of those attending do not re-offend during the following 12 months.

An independent audit of the scheme at the end of the LPSA confirmed that that all targets had been achieved. It should be noted that the final target relating to re-offending compares with only 40% prior to the scheme.

The scheme has conclusively shown that people who receive interventions about their alcohol use and offending are less likely to re-offend.

