

Police and Crime Panel

26th October 2017

Checkpoint Programme Update

Report of Chief of Staff



Purpose

1. To provide panel members with an update on the Checkpoint programme and how this has developed during the past year.

Background

2. The Checkpoint programme, launched in April 2015, aims to reduce the number of victims of crime by reducing reoffending and improving life chances. The programme offers eligible offenders a four month long contract to engage with services as an alternative to prosecution and offers interventions to address the underlying reasons why they committed the crime to prevent them from doing it again.
3. Not all offences can qualify for the Checkpoint programme. Serious offences such as rape, robbery or murder will not be eligible for Checkpoint and the programme does not include driving offences, or cases of hate crime. A list of included offences is included in [Appendix 1](#).
4. The offender is supported through the process by a specialist 'navigator' who completes a detailed needs assessment and creates a tailored contract which includes interventions around any of the issues the offender may have. Should the offender successfully complete the contract, including not reoffending, no further action will be taken against them for the original offence. However, if they reoffend or fail to complete the contract they will be prosecuted and the courts will be informed of the circumstances of their failure to complete the contract.
5. This programme is linked to the 'Reducing re-offending' sections of the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan 2016/21, the Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2016/19 and the Darlington Community Safety Partnership Plan 2015/20.

Current Position

6. Within current legislation, there are a number of different out of court disposal (OCD) options available for the police to use for low level offending. Cautions, fixed penalty notices, community resolutions, and restorative approaches are just some of the out of court disposals available. Since April 2015, Checkpoint became one of these, based on evidence and academic research, which we are further enhancing through a Randomised Control Trial.

7. Randomised Control Trial

The Randomised Control Trial (RCT) commenced on the 1st August 2016. The randomiser undertakes an eligibility check and randomises appropriate cases into either the Checkpoint cohort or the traditional disposals cohort, to enable a thorough, robust evaluation of Checkpoint.

8. The forecasting model is used to determine the risk of re-offending within two years of arrest and enables the randomiser to select appropriate cases. Before the start of the RCT, the Checkpoint Governance Board agreed to include “moderate” risk offenders in the randomised control trial, based on the forecasting tool. This meant that only offenders who were eligible for Checkpoint and who were forecast to commit non-serious re-offending within two years of the presenting arrest were included in the Checkpoint randomised control trial. In August 2017, the project team agreed the inclusion of “low” risk offenders, in order to increase the case flow of eligible people into the RCT. An analysis of subjects with ‘low’ risk forecast will be undertaken, but will not be used in the evaluation. The RCT is due to conclude in December 2017.

9. In December 2016, Durham Constabulary proposed the inclusion of a) production/cultivation of cannabis, b) harassment (non-intimate relationships, non-DV offences), and c) malicious communications, as additional Checkpoint eligible offences. It is important to note that these offences would otherwise be eligible for an out of court disposal such as a simple adult caution. This was agreed by all members of the County Durham and Darlington Reducing Reoffending group. A rigorous risk management plan is maintained and steps are taken to ensure that all partners are in agreement and have a clear and consistent communications strategy.

10. Checkpoint Domestic Abuse

Durham Constabulary commenced a testable treatment of offenders in incidents of domestic abuse using the established principles of the Checkpoint model from 10th April 2017. The testable treatment is looking at the treatment and interventions that are available for both victims and offenders within the programme to determine gaps and opportunities prior to the evaluation of the project. A multi-agency project board has been formed to progress this work, reporting to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG). A quality assurance group is also being set up to provide assurance on the quality of the Domestic Abuse Checkpoint project.

11. It should be noted that the majority of the offenders put through this project would have received a police caution for the offence, with no additional interventions or action taken following the caution. This project will allow additional support to be available to tackle the offending behaviour and therefore safeguard the victims and any children in the household. A case study is available in [Appendix 2](#).

12. The work will be a key lever for engagement to the recently announced high volume, non-high risk perpetrator interventions, funded via the Home Office’s Violence Against Women and Girls: Service Transformation Fund and strong links between the two areas of work have been established.

13. Checkpoint 3D

It was quickly identified at an early stage of the experiment that the current criteria into the Checkpoint Programme excluded first time and very low level offenders. Often many of these subjects need help and support but were declined the opportunity. Many of these subjects were receiving an out of court disposal resulting in a criminal conviction. Checkpoint 3D was established to pick up this tier of very low level offenders and offer them the opportunity to change their lives. This follows the exact same principles as Checkpoint except for the criminal history of the subject (one criminal conviction or none).

Performance

14. Since the start of Checkpoint, there have been over 1000 people who have received a Checkpoint disposal. Phase 1 and 2, known as the implementation phase, included the pilot leading up to the Randomised Control Trial. Phase 3 is known as the Randomised Control Trial phase, and this involves eligible people being randomised either into a treatment (Checkpoint process) or a control (normal prosecution process) group. Checkpoint Domestic Abuse and Checkpoint 3D are currently run in parallel to this, for those ineligible for the RCT, but are not part of the main Checkpoint study.

15. The table below breaks down the number of people who received a Checkpoint disposal at different phases and outlines the number of people who are active, have successfully completed or failed (due to non-engagement or re-offending) their Checkpoint contract. The figures below are correct as of October 2017:

	Phase 1 and 2 (implementation)	Phase 3 (RCT*-current)		Current	
	Pre-RCT	Treatment (checkpoint process)	Control (normal prosecution process)	Checkpoint Domestic Abuse	Checkpoint 3D
Active	0 (0.0%)	30 (16.7%)	N/A because these people received an alternative out of court disposal e.g. caution.	55 (66.3%)	93 (27.8%)
Concluded	498 (89.2%)	40 (22.2%)		14 (16.9%)	176 (52.5%)
Failed-Lack of engagement	32 (5.7%)	5 (2.8%)		1 (1.2%)	19 (5.7%)
Failed- Reoffended	28 (5%)	9 (5%)		2 (2.4%)	22 (6.6%)
Ineligible/Ot her/Declined	4 (0.7%)	96 (53.3%)	1 (0.5%)	11 (13.3%)	25 (7.5%)
Grand Total	562 (100%)	180** (100%)	183 (100%)	83 (100%)	335 (100%)

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

* The 'moderate' cohort is the one that will form the basis of the evaluation, but we've allowed 'low' risk into Checkpoint as part of the RCT. These figures are only reporting on the 'moderate' cohort.

**Whilst a total of 180 people were referred to the RCT, 96 did not receive treatment; a large proportion of this was attributed to custody error in the initial stages, meaning that the total number of people who were allocated to the RCT aspect of the Checkpoint programme is reduced to 84.

16. Checkpoint pilot phase re-arrest and re-offending rates

Prior to the Randomised Control Trial, we carried out a pilot (phase 1), during which 519 people were subject to Checkpoint. A comparison of arrests and proven reoffending data was undertaken with this pilot group, during the 12-months following a traditional Out of Court Disposal (OCD) or Checkpoint start date, and then the data applied to 1000 offenders processed each year. The Checkpoint pilot phase cohort achieved a lower re-arrest rate (18.3% vs 30.4%) and proven reoffending rate (14.6% vs 21.9%) in comparison to a Durham OCD sample. Furthermore, the trajectory of proven reoffending for the Checkpoint cohort suggests a slower rate of increase, with the potential for this gap (in reoffending) to widen over time.

17. The RCT is progressing at a slower rate than originally anticipated, with 180 individuals having been subject to the RCT aspect of the Checkpoint programme (treatment group) and 183 subject to traditional OCDs/normal prosecution (control group). A full independent evaluation will be undertaken by Cambridge University once the RCT concludes.

Next steps

18. Work is currently underway to assess proposals for the direction of the Checkpoint programme once the Randomised Control Trial concludes.

Recommendation

19. The Police and Crime Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report, and provide any questions.

Alan Reiss
Chief of Staff

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

Checkpoint Navigators are funded by the OPCVC.

Staffing

Four of the navigators are seconded to the programme from the National Probation Service, and four are employed by NECA.

Equality and Diversity

n/a

Accommodation

n/a

Crime and Disorder

This project relates to reducing reoffending.

Children's Act 2004

The Local Safeguarding Children's Boards have agreed a protocol in relation to the offence of child neglect.

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

n/a

Environment

n/a

Collaboration and Partnerships

The County Durham and Darlington Reducing Reoffending Group acts as the Checkpoint Governance Board, and includes representatives from all relevant Criminal Justice Agencies and local authorities.

Value for Money and Productivity

n/a

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

To support reducing reoffending.

Commissioning

n/a

Other risks

n/a

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List of included offences

Affray
Assault Actual Bodily Harm (ABH)
Assault Police
Assault-Common/Assault without injury
Burglary in a building other than a dwelling
Burglary in a dwelling
Criminal Damage
Criminal Damage-Threat or Possession with intent to commit
Cruelty to or Neglect of children
Drugs - Possession
Drugs – Cultivation/Production of Cannabis
Drunk & Disorderly
Drunk & Incapable
Fraud or Forgery
Found on Enclosed Premises
Going Equipped
Harassment (non DV/non-intimate relationship)
Malicious Communications
Handling Stolen Goods
Making Off Without Payment
Possession of Offensive Weapon/Bladed Instrument
S.4 Public Order
S.4a Public Order
S.5 Public Order
Theft offences
Theft from Vehicle
Taking without consent (TWOC)
Vehicle Interference

CASE STUDY – Marie* (not real name)

Marie is a 30 year old female and she is a single parent of 4 children; 3 sons aged 10 years, 4 years, 2 years and a young baby daughter. Two of her sons are diagnosed as being autistic. Marie is known to be both police and social services and she has warning markers for mental health issues including attempting suicide. There has been a history of domestic abuse with a previous partner and there have been previous concerns raised in relation to the state of the family home and the care of the children, including concerns raised by her own mother. The children were often turning up late for school looking unkempt and uncared for. Marie was not engaging with either the education services or social services at the time of the incident which has led to her being referred to Checkpoint.

Offence: Neglect of children

Circumstances:-

On the night in question around 10pm, a concerned member of the public has come across Marie who was with 3 of her children, two sons aged 10 years and 4 years and a young baby. Marie was extremely drunk, having been to a friends' house and consumed alcohol. Marie was duly arrested for neglect and her children placed in the care of a family member. Marie was later requested to give a sample of breath to check her alcohol levels and she was deemed to be 3 times the legal limit to drive. Her house was checked and it was found to be in very poor state, unclean, untidy and unsuitable for young children. Marie was subsequently interviewed and made full admissions to the offence and was referred to Checkpoint.

Critical Pathways:-

Mental Health:- Marie was clearly suffering with anxiety and depression (as well as post-natal depression) and finding it increasing difficult to deal with 4 children.

Accommodation:- Marie is struggling to cope with her 4 children whilst living in a small 2 bedroom terraced house, especially the two children diagnosed with autism.

Finances:- Marie was struggling to cope financially as none of the biological fathers of her children were contributing and she was receiving very little financial benefits.

Substance misuse:- Marie's drinking had increased as her depression has deepened and she viewed it as a way of coping with her problems.

Family/Relationships:- Marie has suffered from domestic abuse in the past and has not made good choices in relationships. Her relationship with her mother has also been fragile at times.

Current situation:-

She has completed her Checkpoint programme successfully and appears to have changed her life around. She has engaged fully with both police and social services and abided by all the rules and conditions given to her. She has attended her GP and has been prescribed medication to manage her depression and she has reduced her alcohol intake significantly. She openly admits she feels much better in herself and this is reflected in her caring of the house and the children. She has been enjoying taking the children out to the park and the children genuinely appeared much happier and settled. The children have been attending school regularly.

Her finances have been sorted out (she had been sanctioned by DWP in relation to a previous male tenant still be registered at her address) and she has been able to seek support where necessary. She is in the process of waiting for a house transfer to a bigger house with a garden.