

**News from**

# **Doncaster Drug Action Team**

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## **DRUG-RELATED OFFENDERS TARGETED IN NEW INITIATIVE** **CJIP aims to get them out of crime and into treatment**

A CLOSE-CONTACT scheme aimed at getting drug-using offenders out of crime and into treatment launches today (*Thurs.*) in Doncaster, backed by £2 million of government cash over the next two years.

The Criminal Justice Interventions Programme (CJIP) targets offenders who break the law to finance a Class A drug habit, then monitors them closely as they move through treatment and aftercare to make sure they don't slip back into their old ways.

From today, offenders aged over 18 who are charged with a 'trigger offence – such as shoplifting, burglary, robbery or stealing vehicles – will be given a drugs test whilst in the custody suite at Doncaster Police Station. If the test is positive they will be referred to an arrest referral officer who will organise a quick route to drug treatment.

Doncaster Drug Action Team staff say it is difficult to predict how many drug-using local offenders will be identified through CJIP, though they estimate more than 600 a year.

Offenders who choose the CJIP route will be given an individual care package which sets out to keep them in treatment. This is the start of a close contact process through the justice system. Offenders who get sent to prison will be tracked through their sentence and given support on release. Those who receive a community sentence will be constantly monitored and supported by drugs workers.

Mervyn Thomas, chair of Doncaster Drug Action Team welcomed CJIP, saying it will have a big impact on the local drive to cut drug-related crime. He said: "Offenders are unlikely to come into contact with the programme just once, and their support needs will not end when they finish their sentence or treatment. Because of this, CJIP interventions form part of a beginning-to-end support programme that follows and manages offenders as they pass through the criminal justice system, covering police custody, courts and probation, prison, treatment, throughcare and aftercare.

"Treatment is not a soft option. Orders imposed by the courts usually involve a strict monitoring regime and some drug misusers will be directed to treatment in addition to prison rather than instead of it. Evidence shows that treatment works – not just residential treatment or methadone prescribing but also a wide range of less intensive alternatives, such as counselling."

Doncaster was chosen as a CJIP area for several reasons, including its high crime rate and the fact that drug testing is already carried out in the town's custody suite. Over 80 per cent of local addicts are heroin users, through there is a small amount of crack cocaine used in the town.

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Doncaster's CJIP project is managed by newly appointed Paul Martin, who has taken a two year secondment from his role as a local chief inspector with South Yorkshire Police. He will head a team of multi-agency throughcare and aftercare workers who will provide round-the-clock advice and support. Throughcare staff, including arrest referral and court liaison workers, will support drug misusers from arrest to sentence and beyond. And aftercare workers will provide additional support for issues such as housing, financial management, family relationships, learning new skills and employment.

Treatment is cheaper and more effective than repeatedly putting problem drug users through the revolving door of the criminal justice system without support to help them kick their habit. The Home Office says every £1 spent on treatment saves £3 in the criminal justice system.

Doncaster Mayor Martin Winter is the CJIP 'local champion', a role that involves being accountable to ministers for the successful delivery of the scheme in Doncaster.

He said: "It is a well known fact that there is a strong link between drug use and crimes such as burglary and theft. CJIP is a welcome opportunity to bring agencies such as the Council, probation service, police and health services together to fight drug-related crime in Doncaster. I am very pleased to act as the project champion for CJIP in the borough as it links closely with my pledge as Mayor to create cleaner streets and safer neighbourhoods."

Don Valley MP Caroline Flint, who as Home Office Minister has special responsibility for drug issues, said: "This innovative programme addresses the drug addiction at the root of so much acquisitive crime. Those arrested are drug tested and if they test positive for Class A drugs are referred into treatment. The programme will manage and support these individuals and their drug habit wherever they go, whether they are in prison or in the community."