

# DIP in...

**Safer Birmingham Partnership**  
Working Together for a safer city

Update on Birmingham's Drug Interventions Programme

Issue 20 – February 2009

## A JOB ON THE TIGHTROPE

**Birmingham DIP's Arrest Referral Workers operate on a tightrope – in an environment where there is a precarious balance between enforcement and treatment.**

When prisoners are brought into the cells by police officers they are often angry or upset – some are still under the influence of drugs, or aggressive, or depressed, even suicidal.

If they test positive for drugs, they see an Arrest Referral Worker, who assesses their drug use and treatment needs in the cells.

Birmingham DIP has a total of 28 Arrest Referral Workers in three teams, each with a Supervisor, based in police stations across the city.

Birmingham DIP introduced 'Required Assessment' in April 2006, as part of the Government 'Tough Choices' initiative.

It is a statutory requirement that all offenders who test positive for Class A drugs undergo an assessment of their drug use and treatment needs.

Failure to cooperate with the Required Assessment constitutes an offence.

Arrest Referral Workers are responsible for carrying out the majority of Required Assessments in Birmingham and each assesses around 100 offenders a month.

### Listening

"Arrest Referral Workers have to have good listening and crisis intervention skills," said Kerry Trinder, who is newly promoted from Arrest Referral Supervisor in Birmingham to Arrest Referral Coordinator for the West Midlands.

"They have to be able to engage someone in a difficult environment and get them to open up.

"They have only an hour to obtain quite a lot of information about the client's drug use, health and mental wellbeing, criminal behaviour, support network and social functioning.

"And then they have to assess the options for treatment, which could be with one of the four DIP teams or, if they are a Prolific or other Priority Offender (PPO), with Swanswell (formerly known as Drug Solutions Birmingham).

### Working together

"The Arrest Referral Worker liaises closely with the treatment agency and ensures that arrangements are in place to encourage the offender to attend and engage in treatment.

"They also have to have a good understanding of the way police work and balance the sometimes contradictory views of enforcement and treatment."

But Kerry added that, like her, the Arrest Referral Workers enjoyed the challenges of their jobs and being able to make a difference.

The staff come from a mixture of backgrounds – some have completed sociology or psychology degrees and some have become interested in the role through careers in other 'wraparound' services.

Over the last year, the role has developed, with an increasing number of initiatives and treatment options to support the overall DIP aim of engaging offenders in treatment to break the cycle of drug abuse and crime.

### A tale of caution

One of these new initiatives is to offer first-time offenders or those with a history of relatively minor offences a police caution, provided they are willing to undergo an assessment of their drug misuse with an Arrest Referral Worker and engage in further sessions.

Unlike the rest of DIP, in which the focus is on Class A drugs, the Conditional Cautioning requirement can be made for the misuse of any drug and is often imposed for offences related to cannabis.

If they accept the caution, the offender has to also attend three structured sessions at the police station over the next four weeks.



**A group of Birmingham DIP Arrest Referral Workers.**

Arrest Referral Supervisor Narinder Richardson said: "Because the offenders in the police cells are feeling so vulnerable, it is a good time to look at the positives of entering into treatment, engage them and get the ball rolling.

"The environment can be daunting – but the Arrest Referral Worker provides a confidential service, giving them some assurance that there is hope."

And Trevor Whitehead, Arrest Referral Supervisor, added: "For a lot of offenders, being treated like human beings opens doors for you as an Arrest Referral Worker."

At these sessions, an Arrest Referral Worker gives them information about drug misuse, the health and social consequences and how to reduce the harm caused by their misuse of drugs.

Only if they comply with the DIP requirement of attending the assessment and harm reduction sessions will the police issue a caution – and if they fail to uphold their side of the agreement, they are processed for the original offence through the magistrates court.

"It is aimed at educating people with a low level of drug use – to prevent them from becoming high level, chaotic users," said Kerry.

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### Brief interventions

The Arrest Referral Workers have teamed up with Dr David Best, Research Manager for Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team, to develop and pilot brief intervention packages for offenders who use cocaine.

"They often don't consider themselves to have a drug problem or have just started using cocaine," said Kerry.

"An Arrest Referral Worker will sit down with them and use a mapping system developed by Dr Best to look into people's motivation for using cocaine or other stimulants.

"The sessions focus on increasing awareness of the harm caused by drug misuse and the consequences for the individual and the community and on motivating the offender to change their behaviour."

## THE SUPERVISORS

The Arrest Referral Workers have three well-experienced Supervisors, who split their time between the police stations where their staff are based and the DIP office at the Gee Business Centre in Aston.

### Christine Emery – F Cluster

After being an Arrest Referral Worker for nearly three years, Christine was appointed Birmingham Arrest Referral



Supervisor in January 2009. She previously worked at Sandwell Council on a Government funded project, getting the long term unemployed

back into work.

She is married to a police officer, has three grown-up children, three grandchildren (a fourth on the way!) - and her main hobby is playing crown green bowls.

Christine supervises ARWs based at Steelhouse Lane, Thornhill and Rose Road police stations.

### Narinder Richardson – D Cluster

Narinder, who has worked in drug treatment services for seven years, became an Arrest Referral Supervisor for DIP Birmingham in April 2006. After gaining a Masters degree in criminology, her interest in the relationship between drugs and crime grew and she became a Community Drugs Worker in Leeds.

Her next role was as a Drugs Outreach Worker for the police, working with Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPOs).

She now runs a team of nine Arrest Referral Workers, based in the police Operational Command Units (OCUs) covering Queens Road, Aston, Sutton Coldfield and Stechford. She is also in charge of two Court Workers, based at Sutton Coldfield.

"I like the fact that I can use my previous knowledge and experience of working with drug users in the community and in the criminal justice system to assist my staff in getting clients into treatment," said Narinder.

### Trevor Whitehead – E Cluster

After spending most of his working life as an Electronics Service Engineer, Trevor decided, at the age of 49, to switch into a more caring role and gained a qualification in counseling at Wolverhampton University.

He moved on to a job with an agency for homeless people with alcohol problems and, nearly three years ago, he became an Arrest Referral Worker at Queens Road police station in Birmingham.

He is now an Arrest Referral Supervisor, with a team based at Bournville Lane, Kings Heath and Belgrave Road police stations.

"I liked the idea of trying something different to locking up and throwing away the key," said Trevor.



Pictured (from left) are Kerry Trinder, Narinder Richardson and Trevor Whitehead.

### Kerry Trinder – Arrest Referral Co-ordinator

Kerry, who has a degree in sociology, has been an Arrest Referral Worker for six years, having been among the first intake working in Smethwick police stations.

In 2005 she became Arrest Referral Supervisor for Birmingham DIP's 'E' cluster of Police Operational Command Units (OCUs).

"I enjoy playing a part in the direction and development of DIP into the way it is going today, helping to mould it," she said.

Kerry has recently taken up her new post as Arrest Referral Co-ordinator for the West Midlands and has been succeeded in her previous position by Christine.

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

"We try to break down barriers – we introduce ourselves and explain that we are not police officers," said Arrest Referral Worker Natalie Parry, who normally works at Bournville Lane police station but is pictured here at Kings Heath.

"Quite often we see people regularly so they get to know us – and people talk to us quite openly."



an offender is arrested



Arrest Referral Worker Natalie Parry assesses the prisoner



Kings Heath police station Custody Officer Lee Burstow brings a cup of tea to the prisoner



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