

5 The supply of illegal drugs and alcohol

5.1 Introduction

It is important to establish a sound understanding of the nature and size of local illicit drug markets in order for the DAAT to plan effectively to reduce the supply of drugs.

The National Drug Strategy aims to tackle the supply of drugs at every level including internationally, nationally, regionally and at local levels. This section will review the local drug markets, particularly those operating at street level.

5.2 The national picture

The availability of drugs and drug dealing on the streets is often accompanied by violence, disruption, harassment and intimidation within the communities where it takes place. Ready availability makes it easier for young people to develop into problematic drug users and harder for ex-users to stay free from drug use. It also affects sustained problematic drug users who in turn damage themselves, their families and their communities as well as society more widely. The government's action to reduce the supply of drugs therefore is directed to generate sustained impact on the supply of class A drugs to the UK and availability within its communities.

Nationally, there has been continued action against drug traffickers; in the first nine months of 2003/04 enforcement agencies disrupted 121 organisations responsible for supplying substantial amounts of class A drugs. They also seized 18,456kg of heroin and cocaine targeted at the UK. National enforcement agencies are now working very closely with agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean to target those gangs involved in trafficking cocaine. Training, mentoring and other support is offered to these countries to further enhance their own law enforcement capacity.

The government has strengthened its powers to investigate and confiscate criminal proceedings from drug dealing. Since December 2002, £84 million has been seized, representing a huge loss of working capital for drug traffickers.

Regionally, the capacity of police forces has been increased to deal with drug dealers, resulting in dealers across force boundaries being brought to justice.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced greater powers to close crack houses and between January and September 2004, 150 crack houses were closed nationally.

5.3 What targets are we working to?

National Drug Strategy outcome: to reduce the supply of illegal drugs on our streets.

Partnership Service Agreement target: to reduce the use of class A drugs and the frequent use of any illicit drugs among all young people under the age of 25, especially by the most vulnerable young people, and reduce drug related crime, including as measured by the proportion of offenders testing positive at arrest.

National Key Performance Indicators:

- amount (g) of heroin, cocaine/crack and ecstasy seized by police in their drug partnership area per 10,000 population.
- number of seizures of heroin, cocaine/crack, ecstasy/other and total class A drugs by police in their drug partnership area per 10,000 population.
- total of all assets (monetary value) recovered from persons brought to justice for Class A drug supply offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 directly related to police, per 10,000 population.
- number of Class A drug supply offences brought to justice per 10,000 population (heroin, cocaine/crack, ecstasy/other and total class A drugs).

These targets currently are under review by the Home Office Drug Strategy Directorate and may be subject to change.

5.3.1 National context

The National Drug Strategy performance indicators aim to identify levels of activities in relation to the supply of heroin, cocaine and crack (class A drugs). These drugs are reported to be responsible for increasing levels of acquisitive crime such as theft, burglary and robbery. The number of seizures, quantity of drugs seized, the confiscated profits of drug dealers and the number of drug dealers prosecuted are the main focus of the National Key Performance Indicators.

In addressing drug supply, the government is committed to the Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP) which aims to provide immediate access to treatment for those within the criminal justice system. It targets those whose offending is most likely to be driven by their addiction to drugs.

Wirral DAAT recognises that a balanced approach to tackling drug misuse is essential in order to tackle the wide-ranging problems. Enforcement plays a vital role alongside treatment, education and prevention work. Reducing demand locally will have an impact on drug supply.

In Wirral, as in other parts of the UK, there has been an increase in the supply and use of crack cocaine alongside a reduction in price. Practitioners in this field, during a focus group in September 2004, said that communities are concerned about the accessibility and low price of crack cocaine, heroin and alcohol. They also felt that the police face significant challenges in tackling the increasingly flexible and mobile drug-related offenders.

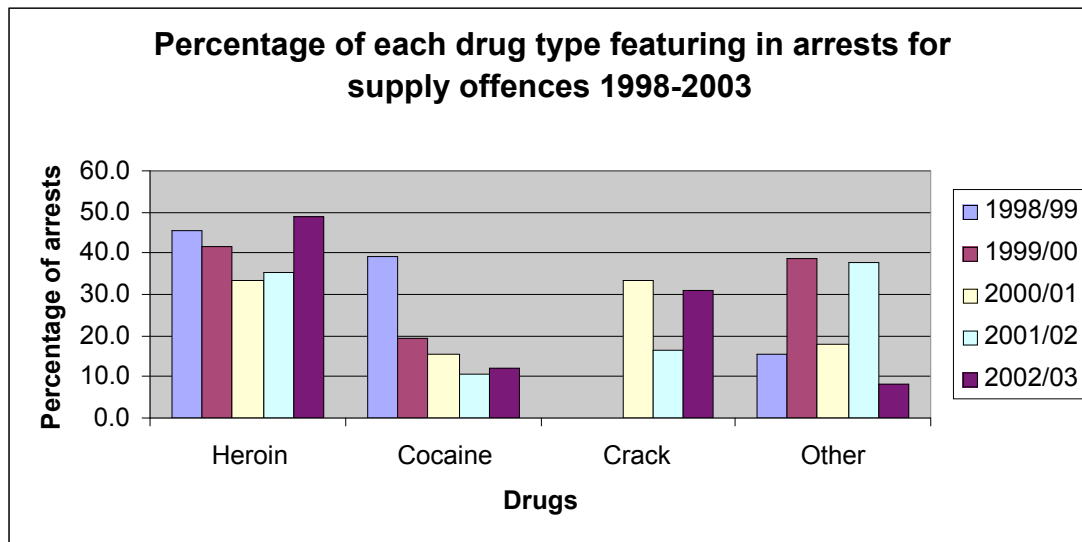
Information on the illicit supply and use of drugs is particularly difficult to retrieve because it is, by definition, illegal and secretive; much of the detail relies on the honesty of service users or information relating to people who have been arrested by the police. Unlike other crime data such as burglaries and vehicle crime, drug offences predominantly are only recorded when arrests are made. Therefore, police data will not give the whole picture of drug use and supply. In addition, there are some difficulties relating to the comparability of arrest data and the absence of seizure data at a Wirral level. This information is only collated at force level nationwide, therefore this is a problem experienced by all DAATs across the country.

During the practitioners focus group (above), practitioners cited alcohol and poly-drug use, including alcohol and crack, as a problem in Wirral. Data relating to illegal supply of alcohol was not readily available for the audit.

5.4 What is the problem?

The Merseyside Drug Market Profile Report (January 2004), compiled by Merseyside Police, lists the availability of the following drugs in Wirral: heroin, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, cannabis, illegal methadone, methadone, LSD, amphetamine, benzodiazepines and anabolic steroids. There are several sources of information on drug types used in Wirral: arrests for supply offences, drug-testing results of detainees and two studies in 2002 on the supply of drugs in Wirral. Police figures on arrests for supply offences for Wirral over the past five years (figure 1) show that the proportion of arrests for supplying cocaine has been declining since 1998. Crack did not feature until 2001/02 and now makes up a third of the arrests.

Figure 1: Bar chart showing the arrests for supply offences by drug type between 1998 and 2003



Source: DAAT Availability Plan 2003/04

A number of local studies have been commissioned by Wirral DAAT, looking into the problem of drug use in Wirral. One study, carried out with Liverpool John Moore's University (LJMU), gained the views of service users regarding the nature and scale

of the problem. *An assessment of illicit drug markets in Wirral (2002/03)* interviewed 82 service users who concluded that heroin and crack cocaine are becoming more readily available and that users are relatively safe from the police when buying these drugs. As can be seen in figure 2, 63% of male respondents felt it was 'very easy' to buy both heroin and crack cocaine.

Figure 2: Tables showing service users views on ease of purchasing heroin and crack cocaine in Wirral 2002/03

Perceived ease of purchasing heroin in Wirral			
Gender	Very easy (%)	Easy most of the time (%)	Easy some of the time (%)
Male	63	34	3
Female	44	44	12

Source: An assessment of illegal drug markets on Wirral, 2002/03, Liverpool John Moores University.

Perceived ease of purchasing crack cocaine in Wirral			
Gender	Very easy (%)	Easy most of the time (%)	Easy some of the time (%)
Male	63	36	1
Female	47	40	13

Source: An assessment of illegal drug markets on Wirral, 2002/03, Liverpool John Moores University

Of the male respondents, 69% felt it was very safe or safe to buy heroin without police intervention and 73% thought it was very safe or safe to buy crack cocaine. Female respondents were less likely to say it was safe to buy either drug without police intervention. It should be emphasised that these are the views of problematic drug users, some of whom access drugs services in Wirral, and is not necessarily the view of the general population.

More respondents felt crack cocaine had become readily available than they did for heroin (see figure 3), which reflects the practitioners' views that there is a perceived increase in the accessibility of these drugs.

Figure 3: Table showing the service users' responses regarding the availability of drugs in Wirral in 2002/03

Has heroin become readily available?			
Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Same (%)
Male	74	0	26
Female	67	5	28

Has crack cocaine become readily available?			
Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Same (%)
Male	81	0	19
Female	69	6	25

Source: An assessment of illegal drug markets on Wirral, 2002/03, Liverpool John Moores University

The drug users in the sample bought heroin from between one and 20 dealers; the most common number of dealers being two. For crack cocaine the most common number of dealers was four. The majority of drug purchases were made from dealers in Wirral, although approximately one third had bought crack from a dealer outside of the area.

Another factor that was examined during the study was the purity of the drugs being purchased. We have compared it with the purity nationally, see figure 4, and the purity in Wirral is of a higher standard than the national average.

Figure 4: Table showing the purity of drugs seized in Wirral in 2004 compared to the national purity in 2002

Drug	Wirral (2004)	National average (2002)
Heroin	30-60%	40%
Crack	70-100%	71%
Cocaine	30-70%	61%

Sources: Merseyside Drug Market Profile, January 2004, and Home Office Statistical Bulletin – Drug Seizure and Offender Statistics, 2004.

This pattern is also reflected in the typical cost and quantity of heroin (see figure 5). Heroin bought in one purchase in Wirral in 2002 was 33% more than the typical cost nationally in 2001, yet crack cocaine was 33% cheaper.

Figure 5: Table comparing the cost and quantity of heroin and crack in one purchase in Wirral 2002 with the UK average for 2001

Cost and quantity ¹ bought in one purchase	Typical quantity of heroin	Typical cost of heroin	Typical quantity of crack bought	Typical cost of crack bought (£)
Wirral (2002)	1	£10	1	£10
UK (2001)	1	£7.40	1	£15

Source: UK drug report 2001 and An assessment of illegal drug markets on Wirral, 2002/03, Liverpool John Moores University

When the equivalent figures for the total cost and quantity of heroin and crack bought by a user in the last seven days (seven days prior to the survey) is examined, the quantity of crack bought was the same in Wirral as nationally (figure 6). However, it

¹ 1 = a self reported 'wrap' or nominal 0.10 gram bag of heroin or a rock of crack cocaine

was less costly due to the cheaper price of crack in Wirral. Only half the quantity of heroin was bought in Wirral compared to typical national figures from the previous year.

Figure 6: Table comparing the cost and quantity of heroin and crack over the last seven days in Wirral 2002 with the UK average for 2001

Cost and quantity bought in last seven days	Typical quantity of heroin	Typical cost of heroin	Typical quantity of crack bought	Typical cost of crack bought (£)
Wirral (2002)	12	£100	14	£120
UK (2001)	24	£177.40	14	£212

Source: UK drug report 2001 and An assessment of illegal drug markets on Wirral, 2002/03, Liverpool John Moores University

A Wirral DAAT consultation exercise with 15 local service users (November 2004) examined the issue of supply. Although the service users agreed that it was relatively easy for them to obtain drugs as ‘existing’ customers, they felt that new users would find it difficult to obtain drugs from a dealer not known to them. They reported that, due to the police using a range of tactics including undercover officers buying from dealers, the dealers were now reluctant to sell to people unless they were introduced by a trusted source.

5.5 What are we doing about it?

Wirral DAAT continues to work in partnership with the police and other enforcement agencies to help combat the supply of illicit drug use in Wirral. This is done through drug seizures, such as Operation Hawk and Operation Priory, and through bringing to justice a large proportion of offenders for possession and supply offences. Data is not available for Wirral for drug seizures, however it is available for Merseyside. This data collation problem is reflected across England and Wales as data is collected by force area rather than local areas. Figure 7 shows the total amounts seized in grams in Merseyside for 2003/04.

Merseyside Police has not previously been required to record its activities to combat supply so it is difficult to produce accurate comparisons with other police areas. The requirements of the National Performance Framework and related Key Performance Indicators now place a new emphasis on this information and future comparisons will be possible.

However, it is felt that there will always be inaccuracies in the data as offenders very rarely give the true destination of drugs seized. The present system of recording data in relation to seizures does not necessarily reflect the local picture. For example, a large seizure of drugs at Wirral docks, which may be destined to be sold elsewhere, would still be recorded as a Wirral seizure; similarly a seizure of a kilo of heroin in Liverpool, destined for Wirral, would not be shown in the Wirral data.

Figure 7: Table comparing the Merseyside seizure figures for 2003/04 with the UK figures for 2002

Drug type	UK 2002	Merseyside 2003/04
Heroin	461 grams	87.6 grams
Cocaine	605 grams	21.7 grams
Ecstasy	389 tablets	0.1 tablets
Amphetamine	238 grams	41.3 grams
Crack	10 grams	0.44 grams
Cannabis	13 kilograms	213.7 grams

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin - Drug Seizure and Offender Statistics 2004

The Middle Market Drugs Unit within Merseyside Police targets people in Merseyside who are dealing class A drugs.

Records produced by the Merseyside Middle Market Drugs Unit show that 73 premises were searched in Merseyside in 2003/04, but it is not clear what proportion of these searches resulted in a drugs seizures. In addition, the figure may not include other local searches in Wirral. National and regional figures are available for 2001, and further national figures for 2002 show the total number of seizures for all drug types in the UK came to 145,952. This equates to 24.7 seizures per 10,000 population (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Table showing north west and UK seizures for 2001 and 2002 by drug type

Drug Type	Number of Seizures for the North West 2001	Total Number of seizures for the UK 2001	Total Number of Seizures in the UK 2002
Heroin	1,473	18,260	15,370
Cocaine	399	7,000	6,640
Ecstasy	785	10,460	8,300
Amphetamine	515	6,820	6,980
Crack	168	3,690	4,260
Cannabis	6,374	93,660	102,390
Class A drugs	2,812	38,060	33,550

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin - Drug Seizure and Offender Statistics 2004

The Drugs Strategy Directorate has calculated a quarterly baseline figure for the number of seizures of class A drugs in Wirral per 10,000 population (6.15). Further work is needed at a partnership level to collate this information for both heroin and cocaine/crack.

In Merseyside in 2003/04 the Middle Market Drugs Unit seized 12.3 kilos of heroin, 3 kilos of cocaine, 62 grams of crack and 30 kilos of cannabis. (Figures are not yet available at a partnership level in Wirral). The unit also reported that they seized £254,800 cash and £679,968 worth of drugs ('street value') across Merseyside in 2003/04. This relates to all drug types, not just class A. It can be equated to £6,677 per 10,000 population.

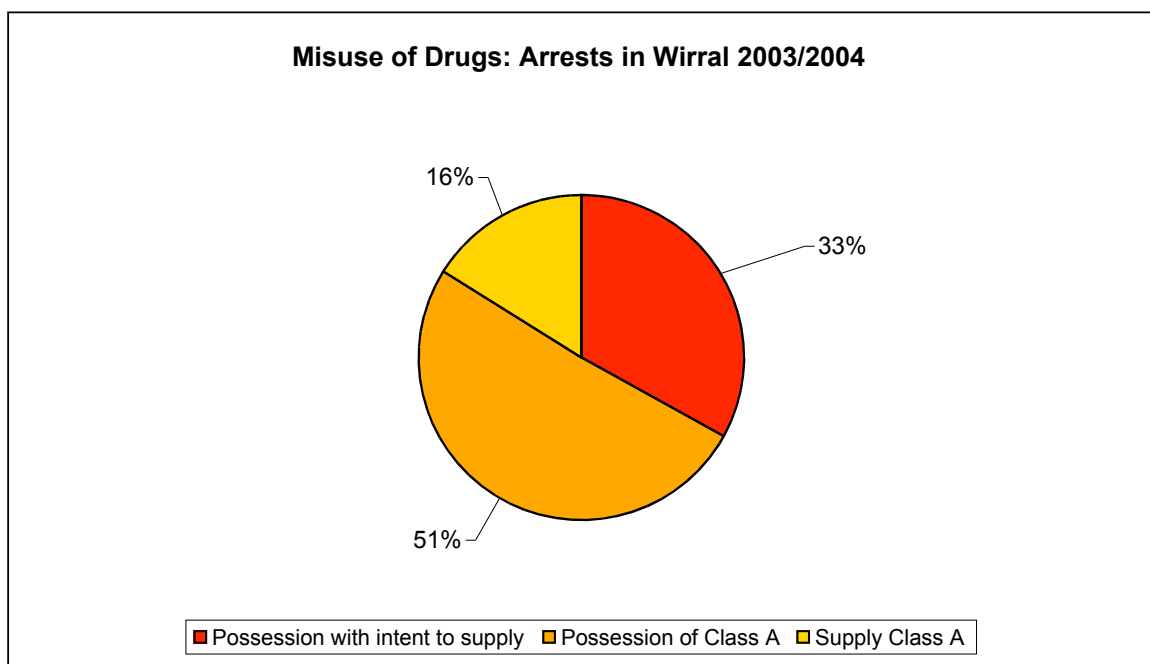
Other seizures listed by The Middle Market Drugs Unit for Merseyside during the same time period were firearms and ammunition, a hydraulic drug press and two sets of body armour.

Figures provided by LJMU show there were 228 arrests in Wirral under the Misuse of Drugs Act in the financial year 2003/04. This equates to 7.3 per 10,000 population. Across Merseyside there were 1,357 arrests for the same time period, which is a higher rate of 9.7 per 10,000 population. This is similar to the baseline figure set by

the Drugs Strategy Directorate for Wirral's performance summary, i.e. 9.86 class A drugs (heroin, cocaine/crack) supply offences brought to justice per 10,000 population.

The pattern of arrests for drug related offence types in Wirral and Merseyside is very similar; just over half of arrests (115) under the Misuse of Drugs Act were made for possession of class A drugs in Wirral during 2003/04 (see figure 9).

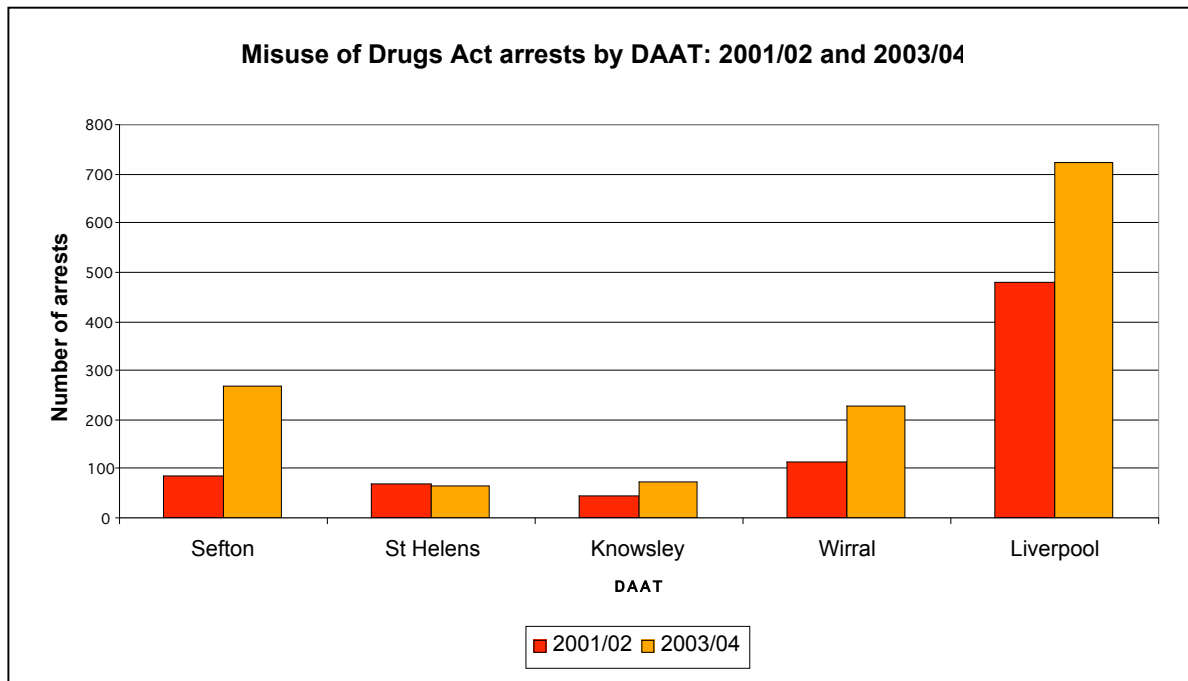
Figure 9: Pie chart showing the percentage breakdown of arrests under the Misuse of Drugs Act in Wirral 2003/04



Source: Liverpool John Moores University Activity Data, October 2004.

It is possible to compare the number of arrests under the Misuse of Drugs Act between Wirral DAAT areas in 2001/02 and 2003/04, although figures for 2002/03 were not available at the time of this audit. The number of arrests has increased in all Merseyside DAAT areas apart from St Helens. In Wirral the number of arrests almost doubled between 2001/02 and 2003/04. In Sefton they more than tripled in the same time period (see figure 10).

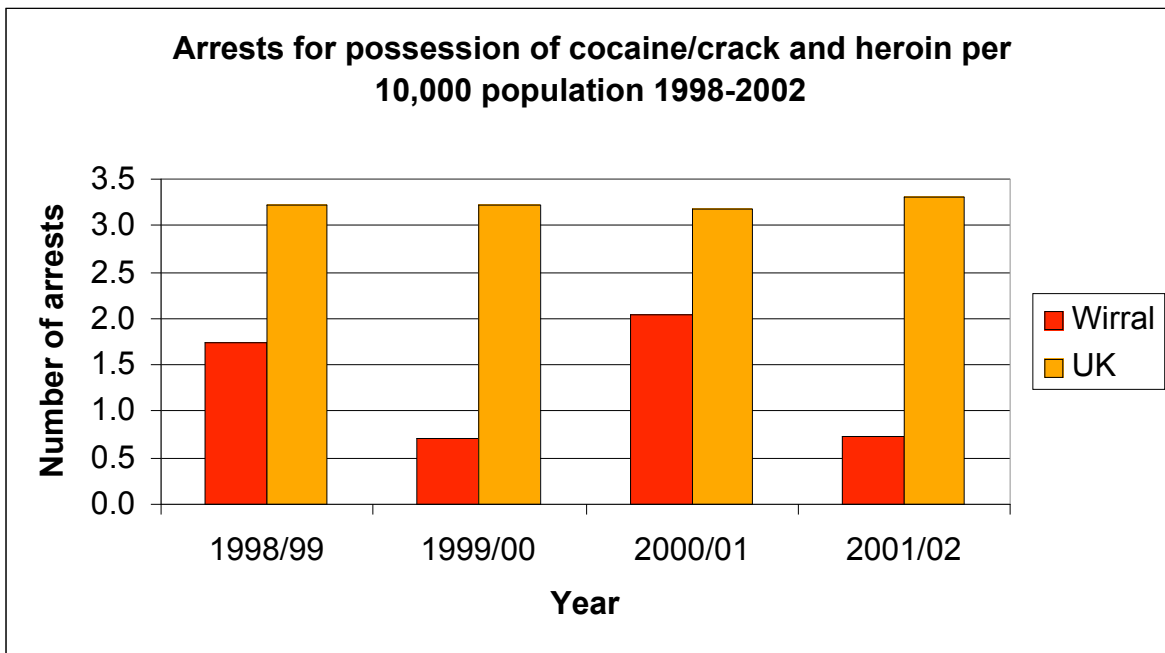
Figure 10: Bar chart showing the number of arrests under the Misuse of Drugs Act, by DAAT, in 2001/02 and 2003/04



Source: Liverpool John Moores University Activity Data, October 2004.

It is also possible to compare arrests for possession of heroin, crack and cocaine in Wirral with national figures. Figure 11 shows that arrest rates for possession of heroin, crack and cocaine per 10,000 population are less in Wirral than nationally, and have varied more over time.

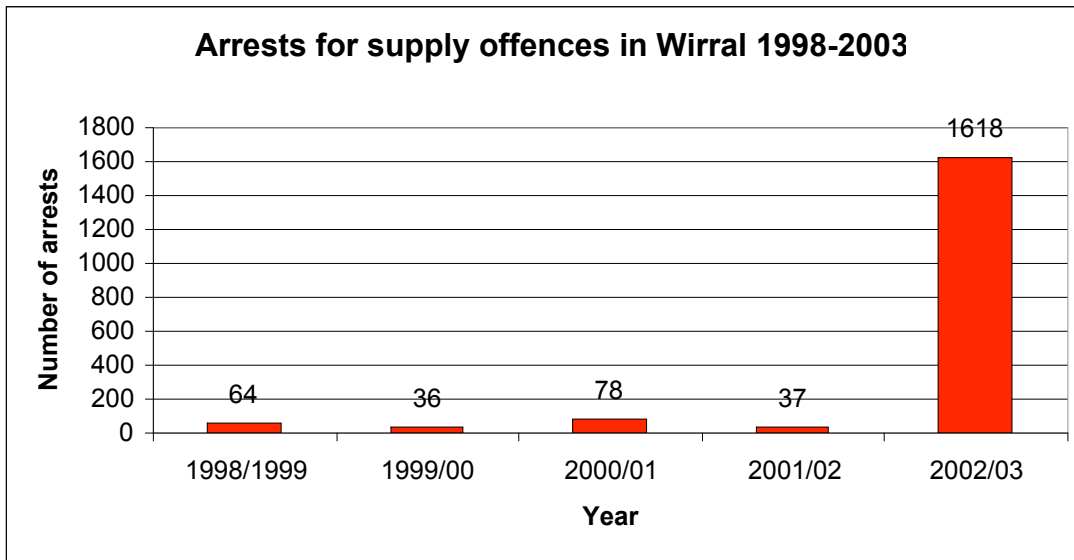
Figure 11: Bar chart showing the number of arrests for possession of crack cocaine and heroin from 1998 to 2002 per 10,000 population in Wirral and the UK



Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin - Drug Seizure and Offender Statistics 2004

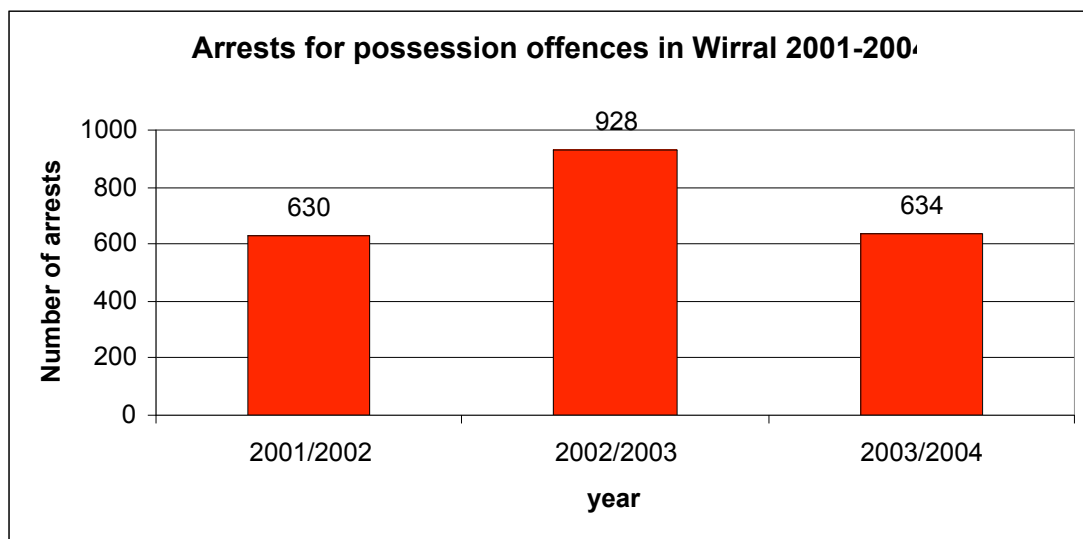
Other figures relating to arrests for supply and possession offences between 1998 and 2004 show large increases in the number of arrests in 2002/03 (particularly with regard to supply). This was said to be due to 'a significant shift towards planned market disruption' (*Wirral DAAT Availability Plan, 2003/04*). The Merseyside Middle Market Drugs Unit is now coordinating operations based on available intelligence.

Figure 12: Bar chart showing the number of arrests for supply offences in Wirral, 1998 – 2003



Source: Wirral DAAT Availability Plan, 2003/04

Figure 13: Bar chart showing the number of arrests for possession in Wirral, 2001 to 2004



Source - CDRP Audit figures, 2004.

NB It is not clear at present why these figures are not apparently compatible with the figures provided by LJMU for arrests under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

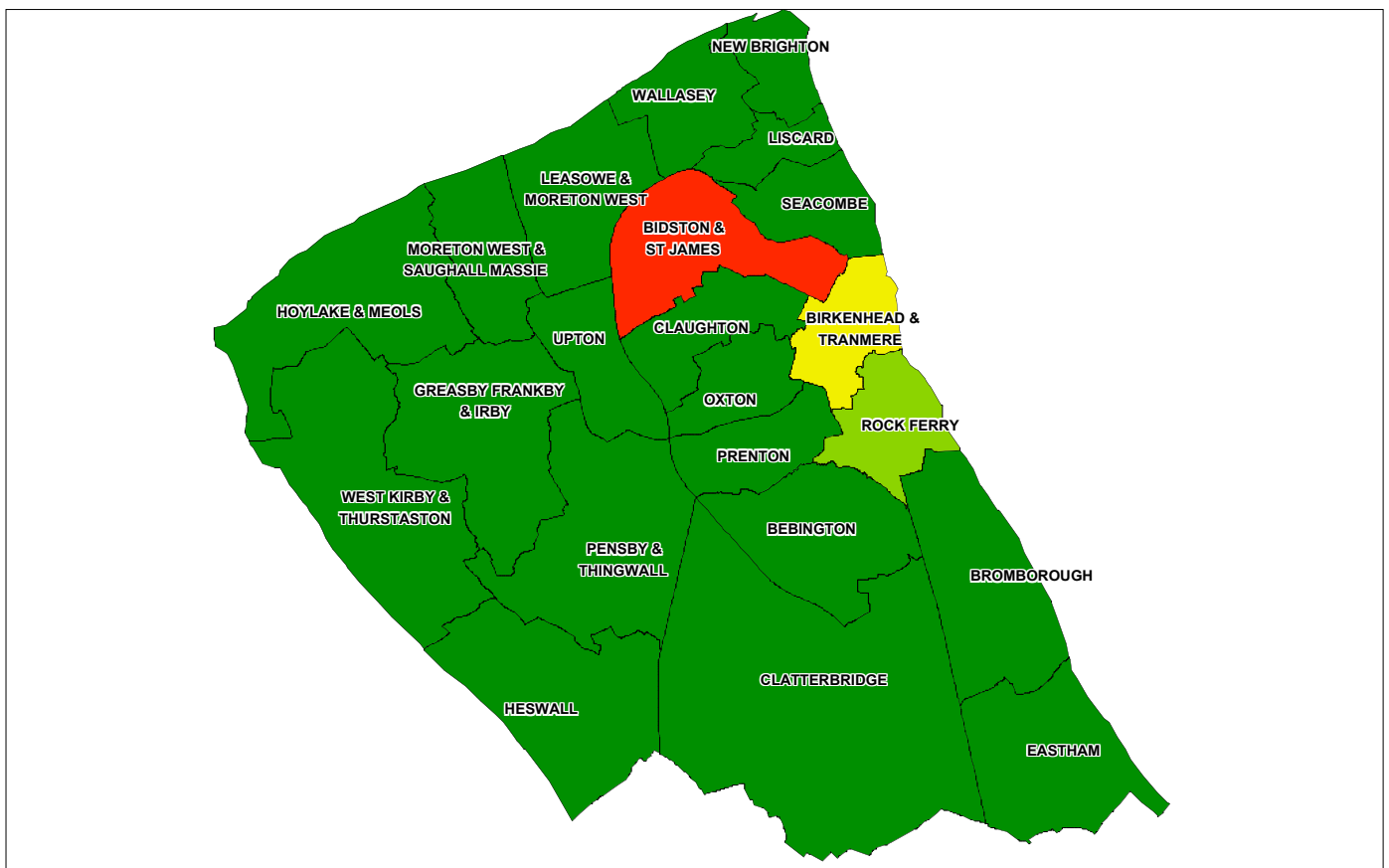
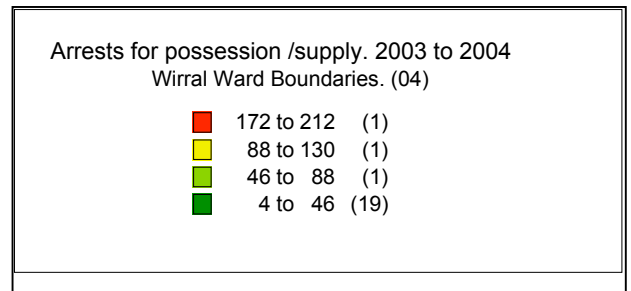
The number of arrests for possession and supply of drugs in Wirral between 2001 and 2004 are mapped out in figure 14. In this period, arrests peaked in the three wards of Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry. This follows patterns of deprivation and other crime type hotspots, as discussed in section 4. Police sources show that the main three areas in which drug use and dealing occur are:

- New Brighton, Liscard and Seacombe
- Bidston, Claughton and Oxtton
- Birkenhead, Tranmere and Egerton.

For further information please see the Communities section of this audit.

Figure 14: Map detailing areas where people have been arrested for possession and supply offences in Wirral, 2003- 2004

Source: Community Safety Team, October 2004.



Merseyside Police is the leading partner in the work being carried out by the DAAT in order to tackle dealers and disrupt drugs supply markets. Much progress has been made, particularly in the past few years, with dramatic increases in arrest rates and a more sophisticated awareness of drugs markets.

Local initiatives in 2003/04 included Communities Against Drugs (CAD) which funded a series of successful police operations. Operation Priory (the largest ever operation of its kind in Merseyside), Operation Halifax and Operation Bakewell targeted the mobile drug supply market between Wirral and Liverpool. Operations Abbeytown, Croston and Cromwell targeted static drug dealers. These operations led to more than 200 arrests and significant levels of drug seizures. Operation Priory was nominated for 'Best practice against street level dealing' in the Tackling Drugs Supply Awards 2003.

Operation Hawk is an ongoing operation targeting the supply of Class A drugs across Wirral. A number of warrants in relation to the possession and supply of controlled drugs have been executed since the operation began in January 2004. Quantities of controlled drugs have also been seized. This operation has been put forward for a Home Office award.

CAD funding bought a range of intelligence and evidence gathering equipment to support such police operations, including customising and equipping a video management unit in Birkenhead police station.

Merseyside Police has established a Middle Market Drugs Unit to target offenders who deal in significant amounts of Class A drugs. The unit coordinates law enforcement activity and shares relevant information with Wirral DAAT. It also ensures compliance with the Medicine Act (1968) through visiting Wirral pharmacies (248 in 2003/04) and prosecuting or warning any which breach practice (13 in 2003/04).

In addition, the Middle Market Drugs Unit attended 26 drug related incidents in schools. The strength of their approach lies in the fact that they can attend in plain clothes to minimise the impact on the school and provide proactive education about the dangers of drug use.

Cross border collaboration is facilitated by the Wirral Senior Officers Group and the Wirral Joint Agency Group, which feed into the Merseyside Multi-Agency Governance Group.

Several research studies have been conducted by Liverpool John Moore's University in 2003 looking into drug use and supply in Wirral: the needs of crack cocaine users in Liverpool and Wirral, an assessment of illicit drug markets in Wirral, Merseyside drug market profiles and other service user surveys. This detailed information (only summarised in this audit) provides the foundation for further enforcement work.

Police in Wirral regularly use the automatic number plate recognition system which can identify vehicles that are known to the police so that they can observe the vehicles' movements. This is particularly valuable as many supply routes into Wirral involve travel through the Mersey tunnels.

Improved information sharing between police, magistrates and the local authority has resulted in the closure of a nightclub in Wirral. Every club in Wirral is required to have a 'drugs safe' on the premises where confiscated drugs can be stored.

Improved community policing through an initiative called 'Model Beat' is hoped to increase intelligence on the supply of drugs, leading to more informed enforcement action.

5.6 What are the stakeholders' views?

This section presents views obtained from various studies and surveys undertaken with the general public, including service users, during 2003/04.

DAAT focus group, September 2004

Wirral DAAT held a focus group of nine practitioners and service users in September 2004. Participants believed that there has been a worrying increase in the combined use of crack and alcohol and that this combination of drug misuse leads to a rapid decline in lifestyle and health over a number of months, rather than years.

There was thought to be a decline in the use of some drugs, such as benzodiazepines, possibly due to work with general practitioners to make the prescriptions harder to access.

Practitioners felt that patterns of dealing were increasingly mobile and, therefore, harder to police. Comments included:

- “you can phone and get it in ten minutes”
- “it is very easy to get access to drugs”
- “there are hundreds of people driving round in cars, with mobiles, doing drop offs all day.”

A service user representative described the way in which dealers work a 10am to 4pm day and can earn on average £2,000 to £3,000 a day. They also believed that the price of drugs has gone down and accessibility has gone up. The police were viewed by practitioners as successful in their targeting of dealing from houses, but this was thought to have led dealers to change tactics, becoming more mobile. This makes surveillance and arrests more problematic. Service providers’ comments included:

- “the police have done a very good job... but the problem is so massive that none of us are coping”
- “we all have very good services but we are inundated... the demand has far exceeded our expectations.”

Local practitioners’ views supported research findings that the price of crack is low in Wirral and that it is common for crack and heroin to be bought from the same dealer:

- “you can buy crack and heroin very easily together; this is what dealers are hard selling at the moment as that is where the money is”
- “heroin is as cheap as cannabis.”

They had concerns that young people do not recognise the dangers of class A drugs as the prices are so cheap, and therefore are so accessible.

Focus group participants voiced the opinion that dealers are currently very proactive about selling crack.

Representatives of the Wirral Community Engagement Social Research Project brought up concerns about issues surrounding crack houses in Wirral being associated with some local crime and the handling of stolen goods. They flagged up that crack houses often consist of a number of crack users in one house (with two or three dealers visiting the property) rather than the media image of a house with armed people at the door and hundreds of people coming and going.

5.7 What are the gaps in provision?

Described in this section are potential gaps in the work being undertaken by the DAAT partnerships. These have been identified principally from the findings of the focus group with practitioners and service users held in September 2004 (see above).

This section also identifies gaps in the available data, including those relating to alcohol supply.

The following areas for improvement have been identified for Wirral:

- dealers have changed their tactics; the police need to change theirs, bearing in mind that they are very organised and it is difficult to pursue dealers when they are mobile because this may put the public at risk
- dealers are now choosing who to deal to; it is a closed market. They are also easily replaceable; if someone is caught there is someone ready to take their place straight away. Police officers now seem more willing to learn and be more open to issues around drug use
- the drugs problem is huge and there are difficulties coping with it. Wirral has a range of good services, however these are inundated and it is thought that will not be able to cope with the numbers being referred through the DIP
- police need to be more flexible in their response

- the community need to get in touch with the police more and pull together; communities need to be further empowered to take action
- a lot of people know about services but don't know how to access them
- a study with young people found that there are crack houses in north Birkenhead, where people gather together and are supplied regularly throughout the day with crack. One was being closed during the week this audit was being compiled.

There are gaps in the data available to partnerships, which may affect their ability to know what problems are occurring. In Wirral these gaps are:

- seizures figures only being available at force level for Merseyside, not Wirral specific, which does not give a true reflection of the scale and nature of drug use locally
- Middle Market Drugs Unit figures do not account for smaller seizures in the local area, nor for big seizures which may have been made by customs and excise
- there is no alcohol seizures data available to report; therefore we do not know the extent of the problem at the time of this report
- there is little data regarding the ethnicity breakdown of people being arrested for possession and supply offences.

5.8 What new things do we need to do?

Wirral DAAT will continue to work with the police and other key partnerships to disrupt the illicit drug and alcohol markets in Wirral. Planned enhancements to the successful work already being carried out include:

- partnership working with the DVLA to carry out stop and search operations on vehicles, which are known to be a particularly useful way of disrupting supply

- further work with Operation Hawk and other drug market operations, using the dedicated surveillance unit to gather specific intelligence to secure the arrest and imprisonment of known dealers
- improving information available to magistrates and the local authority regarding the abuse of entertainment and alcohol licences; further encouraging licensees of pubs and clubs to comply with the law regarding the supply of drugs on their premises
- development of the Wirral Evening and Night Time Strategy to encourage the use of drugs safes on licensed premises for the safe storage of found/seized drugs
- work with the Wirral Joint Agency Group (JAG) is expected to play an important contribution to the combined disruption of the illegal drugs market; all key relevant agencies in Wirral have agreed information sharing protocols with JAG, enabling resources to be targeted more efficiently and effectively
- increasing community policing through Operation Model Beat, which should help to disrupt supply and provide improved information about specific areas where sales take place.

5.9 Key findings

Key findings

- In Merseyside in 2003/04 the Middle Market Drugs Unit seized 12.3 kilos of heroin, 3 kilos of cocaine, 62 grams of crack and 30 kilos of cannabis. Figures are not yet available at a partnership level in Wirral.
- The Merseyside Middle Market Drugs Unit seized £254,800 cash and £679,968 worth of drugs ('street value') across Merseyside in 2003/04. This can be equated to £6,677 per 10,000 population, but figures are not yet available at a partnership level.
- There were 228 arrests in Wirral under the Misuse of Drugs Act in 2003/04². This equates to 7.3 per 10,000 population; across Merseyside the rate was higher rate

² Source: Liverpool John Moores University

(9.7 per 10,000 population). There were large increases in the number of arrests in 2002/03 due to “a significant shift towards planned market disruption”³.

- In the period 2001-2004 arrests for possession were focused in the three wards of Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry.
- The main drug supply route to Wirral is from Liverpool, through the Mersey tunnels. A study of drug users in 2002 concluded that 63% of male respondents felt it was very easy to buy both heroin and crack cocaine and approximately 70% felt it was very safe or safe to buy heroin or crack cocaine without police intervention.
- Local and national data shows the purity of heroin, crack and cocaine to be comparable with national figures.
- The typical cost and quantity of heroin bought in one purchase in Wirral in 2002 was 33% more than the typical cost nationally in 2001, yet crack cocaine was 33% cheaper.

³ *Wirral DAAT Availability Plan, 2003/2004.*