

Dorset Police & Crime Panel – 1 February 2019
POLICE AND CRIME PLAN MONITORING REPORT: ANNEX A
Drink/drug related arrests at Road Traffic Collisions

Introduction

At the last Police & Crime Panel meeting on 13 November 2018 the PCC agreed to provide members with further information about drink and drug driving related arrests at road traffic collisions (RTCs) where police have attended.

This stemmed from the PCC advising members that the Force was in talks with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service (DWFRS) around Fire attending non-injury RTCs and concerns that this may impact on the ability to catch drink/drug drivers.

Drink Driving and RTCs - Data & Context

The relevant data are the rates for positive breath tests following RTCs (which would normally lead to an arrest).

The table below provides a summary of the total number of breath tests carried out at RTCs between January and November 2018, the number of positive and negative test results, and the proportion of positive results from the total. ***[NB: These data are unverified management statistics]***

	Jan - Nov 2018										
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
+ve Breath Tests following RTC	28	22	27	31	25	24	36	36	24	26	16
-ve Breath Tests following RTC	246	199	188	240	192	221	281	171	180	211	181
Total Breath Tests following RTC	274	221	215	271	217	245	317	207	204	237	197
% of +ve Breath Tests of total number conducted	10.22%	9.95%	12.56%	11.44%	11.52%	9.80%	11.36%	17.39%	11.76%	10.97%	8.12%

- 2,605 breath tests carried out at RTCs across 11 months (237 per month on average)
- 295 of these tests were positive (11% of the total)

Drug Driving

The Serious Collision Investigation Team, within the Alliance Operations Roads Policing Team, has provided the following:

- 1318 drugwipe procedures completed in 2018
- 714 positive results for either cannabis, cocaine or cannabis and cocaine (54% - reflective of national results)
- 593 negative results for cannabis or cocaine
- 5 refusals to provide a sample for analysis (all arrested and charged with the offence of Fail to Provide)

Dorset currently has 63 officers trained to use drugwipes and complete the custody procedures and administration – the number of qualified officers is above that of comparable forces.

Whilst the drugwipes are an exceptional piece of equipment they do have their limitations. The legislation allows officers to prosecute for drivers over the limit of 17 specified drugs, including illegal and prescription drugs – however, the drugwipes only test at the roadside for 2 of these 17, namely cannabis and cocaine. These 2 drugs do account for 86% of all drug driving offences though.

Drugwipes are particularly useful in detecting drivers who do not visually display any ill effects or symptoms of drug use. Prior to the introduction of drugwipes, such drivers would have been free to go on their way. With the introduction of drugwipes and the Section 5a Excess Drugs legislation these drivers can now be tested at the roadside and arrested. This is reflective of the similar drink drive legislation which quite often a driver is not visually impaired by their level of intoxication but fail a roadside breath test. Impairment is subjective and more difficult to prove the offence while a specified limit is much simpler to evidence.

The drugwipes cost approximately £18 each and are single use, disposable items. Their use is restricted by Policy and includes: at every fatal or serious injury Road Traffic Collisions, incident or intelligence related or if the officer forms their own suspicion of drug use/effect.

During the 2018 Summer Drink Drive Campaign, Dorset were the 3rd best performing county in the country with 160 drugwipe tests administered (81 of which were positive).

Outside of specific Campaigns, Dorset usually ranks 4th in the country for performance. As a result of this Gordon Ramsay approached Dorset in 2017 and requested their support and assistance for a 3 part documentary about Cocaine.