

Treating Addiction, Tackling Crime: The Impact of Probation-Led Residential Treatment on Offender Substance Misuse, Recidivism and Attitudes Towards the Criminal Justice System¹

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Summary: Given the well-documented relationship between substance misuse and offending behaviour, increases in alcohol and drug consumption in Ireland are a cause for concern for criminal justice agencies. In one attempt to address this problem, the Probation Service established a residential treatment facility for men who come before the courts on alcohol/drug-related offences and for male probation clients who are at risk of reoffending due to an addiction problem. This study, part of a larger evaluation, examined whether the programme impacted on future propensity to reoffend in a group of male substance-abusing offenders (n=14). The impact of the treatment programme on two dynamic criminogenic needs – substance misuse and attitudes towards the criminal justice system – was explored, as was the relationship of these dynamic criminogenic needs to future offending behaviour.

Although 64% of clients relapsed after completing the programme, the majority (64%) had not reoffended. The offences of those who did reoffend were all alcohol-related. No significant relationship was observed between propensity to reoffend and attitudes towards the criminal justice system. There were no significant changes in client attitudes over the treatment programme.

Keywords: Substance misuse, attitudes, criminogenic needs, treatment, recidivism.