

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Electronic Interventions As part of an Out of Court Disposal

Executive Summary

The use of out of court disposals is widely debated with critics questioning its effectiveness in deterring offenders from future criminality. Cambridgeshire Constabulary operate a trauma-informed hub that has diverted over eleven thousand clients into treatment pathways, in order to reduce the cost of short-term sentencing and offer the victim a degree of flexibility with what happened to their investigation where the court wasn't an option for them. Electronic pathways are a relatively new phenomenon and share their roots with ongoing work within the NHS to offer a tailored response to emerging mental health concerns. The premise is that those who were capable of using online provisions could do so to keep themselves safe, whilst others with a greater degree of need could be seen face to face.

In August 2021 this concept was embraced by Cambridgeshire Constabulary and an outside provider was selected to offer online interventions to offenders of summary or hybrid offences where all parties agreed to disposal outside of court. Before the inception of electronic diversionary activities, the hub referred all cases for face-to-face interventions, this quickly became untenable as service providers became saturated with clients who could have received intervention in another way. The subsequent evaluation demonstrates that not only are electronic interventions successful at reducing harmful behaviours, but they are a cost-effective way of doing so.

Process Flow

Cambridgeshire Constabulary divert approximately 130 clients per calendar month into online self-led interventions based on the criminal causatory factors. These factors are weighed up next to the protective characteristics of the offender and their risk characteristics to determine which interventions are suitable. Clients can have more than one intervention, and indeed can have a mixture of face to face and electronic interventions where appropriate. The objectives of this process were as follows:

1. Give victims a greater degree of choice in how their investigations were handled and improve outcomes for victims.
2. Reduce recidivism by tackling the causes of criminality and giving a proportionate sanction.
3. Reduce the demand on CJS specifically the need for short term sentences.

Methodology for Evaluation

A sample set of n=100 adults over the age of 18 were selected by the Hub manager. The sample set was a mixture of Male and Females clients who had been sanctioned in early 2021 and placed on an electronic diversion. The samples were broken down into community resolutions and conditional cautions to test whether either sanction was more effective. The individuals from the sample set were then checked against the Police National Computer and local records to see whether there had been any re-offending since the intervention was set. The evaluation included four time points to see whether the interventions offered a short-term effect 0-6 mths a midterm effect 6-12 mths- longer term effect-12-18 months. The evaluation also included what interventions were used and whether the client felt they were helpful or not. This was measured either as a positive intervention, neutral intervention, or a negative intervention.

Results

The results demonstrate that the use of electronic interventions was positive when considering the concept of chance as to whether it would work or not being 50/50. Of the 50 community resolutions issued a total of 39 completed the intervention. Of the 50 conditional cautions a total of 43 were complied with. In comparison adults issued with a community resolution were significantly more likely to complete the electronic intervention than juveniles issued a similar intervention. This is evidenced in the OoCD report December 2022 which highlighted 58% compliance from juveniles.

Sanction	Re-offended 0-6 mths	Re-offended 6-12 mths	Re-offended 12-18 mths
Conditional Caution - 43 complied	3	0	0
Community Resolution-39 complied	8	0	0

The table indicates that of the 43 clients issued with a conditional caution requesting an electronic intervention only three re-offended. Those who re-offended did so within the 6-month period with no subsequent re-offending reported mid term or longer term, this correlates with the findings for community resolutions which found that 8 offenders did re-offend within the short term, but that wasn't repeated mid to longer term and indeed earlier research by the OPCCs office when the offenders hub was reviewed.

These findings are in line with the supported documentation supplied by the Red Snapper Group regarding overall completions. Overall completions are negatively impacted by the low level of compliance from juveniles 58% when considered against adult compliance of 73% compliance (reported in the second Qtr OoCD 2022 report).

There were 84 clients in total who completed electronic interventions. The below table is not an exhaustive list of what courses are available from the provider. The below table sets out the post attitude tests regarding the intervention. Client responses are captured on the table below:

The results indicate that for the most part clients benefit from the intervention, some courses are far more popular than others for example thinking skills, cannabis awareness and alcohol awareness are popular. The provider does have many other interventions, but these did not feature in the review.

Conclusion

In conclusion the use of electronic interventions is a valuable resource to effectively triage investigations where the client can safely be pointed towards self-correction, and those who require a face-to-face service. What is evident is that these diversions do deliver objectives 2 & 3 set out in the executive summary. There does, however, need to be an evaluation about whether or not victims derive a benefit from cases being dealt with outside of the court environment, this was beyond the scope of this review. The current practice of utilising electronic diversions to tackle problematic behaviours is in line with other public service providers such as the NHS, Probation and Prison Service. In addition, the review indicates that the offender model promoted by Cambridgeshire is effective at least when considering tier 1 offenders.

Attitude test Responses	Alcohol Awareness	Thinking skills	Cannabis awareness	Hate Crime	Anger Management	Female Domestic Abuse	Women's program	Emotional Wellbeing	Victim Awareness
Positive	6	12	8	2	7	6	0	2	6
Neutral	4	4	3	0	2	2	0	3	0
Negative	2	6	1	0	5	0	1	0	2