

Q: Will treatment agencies or DATs be specifically mentioned?

A: No, although we are recruiting respondents from every agency in 100 DATs this is just a way to access the 3,000 treatment seekers in order to make the study robust and reliable. We will not mention any specific agencies or DATs in any national reports although each area can expect to receive a feedback report.

Q: Will the effectiveness of individual treatment agencies be assessed?

A: Although we are interested in how effective certain types of agencies are (i.e. drop-in-centres compared with appointment only agencies) and how treatment outcome varies depending on geographical region and treatment programmes, we are not looking to assess the performance of individual agencies. Rather, we are using the agencies as a means of collecting information on a wide range of drug treatment programmes and to reach clients starting new treatment.

Q: Do all agencies have to take part?

A: No, not all agencies have to take part, but we need as many as possible to do so to ensure the results are representative of all types of treatment.

Q: Will the research look at what happens to clients who enter treatment through the criminal justice system?

A: Yes, DTORS is interested in interviewing all clients entering a new treatment programme and looking at the differences in treatment outcomes of those who are referred from the Criminal Justice System compared to those who enter through another route.

Q: Will the interview questions be the same for those who enter the study through the criminal justice system to participants who do so through another route?

A: Yes, all participants will be treated the same regardless of the route they entered the treatment programme.

Q: Why is the Home Office funding the research rather than the Department of Health or the National Treatment Agency?

A: DTORS is of importance to all government departments with an interest in drug use. As the Home Office has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Drugs Strategy it is leading on this cross-cutting research. The Department of Health and the National Treatment Agency support the study and are actively involved in the management of the work through their involvement in the DTORS cross-government advisory group.

If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact either the National Drug Evidence Centre at Manchester University on 0161 275 1659 or Anna Richardson at the Home Office on 020 7035 0423.

www.dtors.org.uk


National Treatment Agency
for Substance Misuse


Home Office



Drug Treatment Outcomes Research Study

Frequently Asked Questions

www.dtors.org.uk

Q: What is DTORS?

A: The Drugs Treatment Outcomes Study or DTORS is the largest ever study of drug treatment undertaken in the UK. It aims to interview 3,000 drug users presenting for treatment in 100 randomly selected Drug Action Teams (DATs) throughout England. Participants will be asked about their drug use, offending history, drug treatment history, risk taking behaviour, mental and physical health and social circumstances. Their progress will then be followed up at three and twelve months. In addition, the research will involve a smaller in-depth qualitative study and a cost benefit analysis.

Q: Why is this study taking place?

A: We need to update the evidence that treatment works. A national study of drug treatment took place in the 1990s (National Treatment Outcomes Research Study or NTORS) and found that treatment for drug use was very cost-effective; for every £1 spent on drug treatment at least £9.50 was saved to society. The findings hugely influenced government's support and funding for drug treatment. NTORS is now out of date, drug use and treatment practice has changed considerably in the last decade and criminal justice routes into treatment have expanded greatly. We need to be able to justify to government that drug treatment is still worth investing in.

Q: What will the information be used for?

A: The information will tell us a great deal about the type of treatment clients are receiving and what effect treatment is having on their drug use and its effect on other areas of their life. The information will be of benefit to drug treatment agencies in finding out what works best for different kinds of people.

The information will also be used to directly inform government decisions about drug treatment over the forthcoming years.

Q: What does the study involve for those who take part?

A: We are aiming to interview every client beginning a new episode in drug treatment. The initial interview will take place at the start of the client's treatment programme and it will on average take on average 45 minutes. It may be longer or shorter depending on how much information participants have to tell us, and the pace at which they choose to go through the questions. We will contact the participant again in three and twelve months time for another short interview.

Q: Who will be interviewed?

A: We are aiming to interview every client that is starting a new episode of drug treatment within a recruitment period for that area. Any client who is starting a new treatment episode - regardless of their treatment history - can take part.

Q: Where will the interviews take place?

A: We can make arrangements to suit the participant. Very often the interviews take place at the agency and if participants are unable to complete the interview at his/her initial contact with the agency, further arrangements can be made. We can also make home visits or at another location that is more suitable for the participant.

Q: What do participants get for taking part?

A: We provide a £10 high street voucher as a thank you for participants who give up their time to take part. Vouchers are posted to a contact address of their choice shortly after the interview.

Q: Why are only new clients interviewed?

A: In order to get an accurate measurement of the effectiveness of drug treatment in the medium and long term, and to chart the progress of someone who is undergoing treatment, we need to interview clients from the very first stage of a new treatment episode.

Q: Does it matter if some new clients are not invited to take part?

A: The study has got a very ambitious target to interview 3,000 drug users presenting for treatment. This means that it is very important to contact every person starting a new treatment episode to ensure that we achieve a large and representative sample of treatment seekers. A large sample will also allow us to undertake detailed analyses of the effectiveness of treatment for different type of treatment users and enable us to draw more robust conclusions from the findings.

Q: Will the information be available to members of the public and will it be possible to identify participants?

A: Once all the data is gathered, the results of the study will be published in a research report which will be available to members of the public. However information on individual agencies, DATs and participants will be kept strictly confidential and participants will remain completely anonymous. There will be no mention of any individual in any of the reports and there will be no means of identifying participants.

Q: Do clients have to take part?

A: No, participation is voluntary. However, if the study is to represent all groups of people we need as many people as possible to take part. The more people we can include in this study, the more accurate it will be.