Engagement, Motivation, & Effectiveness with Substance-Misusing Offenders: Offenders and Staff talk about the Drug Treatment & Testing Order (DTTO)

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Key Findings

- This research aimed to investigate motivation and engagement for substance-misusing offenders on the DTTO using a discourse-analytic methodology.
- In-depth interviews were undertaken with 21 offenders who had completed on average 4 months of their order. Half of these offenders went on to complete the order. In-depth interviews were also undertaken with 6 DTTO probation staff and 5 DTTO treatment staff.
- Two keys themes underpinned offenders’ talk about motivation and engagement on the DTTO: Relationships & Organisation/Continuity.
- The importance of relationships with staff featured heavily in offenders’ accounts of what was working on the order. Such relationships take time to develop; even when offenders see that staff are supportive they may hold back whilst trust is built up. The relationship also needs to include a reciprocal element that needs to be maintained.
- Staff talk about motivation and engagement on the order also constructs relationships as an inter-relational dynamic – something changeable between staff and offenders. However, motivation is viewed at the assessment stage as a test of something residing with the offender.
- The theme of ‘Organisation/Continuity’ is best understood through two sub-themes: 1) Structure & Stability; 2) Activities & New Opportunities.
  1. The structure of the order was viewed as important in both “filling the void left by drugs” and in terms of the strictness; ‘strictness’ however was constructed as a necessary aspect of the order; ‘having to attend’ was viewed as being facilitative in terms of working to reduce one’s addiction.
  2. Activities and new opportunities appeared to play a key role in how offenders constructed new selves and/or different futures. The meaning of activities offenders were undertaking and how this linked with a developing sense of an anticipated future was linked to their ongoing engagement and motivation.
- A preliminary model of motivation and engagement for substance-misusing offenders is proposed and discussed.

Recommendations Summary

Please also see the full Recommendations

- Re-appraise the planning for and organisation of a range of resources (activities and new opportunities) to be available to cater for individual offender plans.
- Consider how contacts with offenders are managed from the first assessment appointment to order completion in relation to staffing stability and continuity, with respect to resources.
- Review cases relatively early on to ascertain what activities/new opportunities are being discussed and/or established.
• Consider the need for awareness raising among staff of best methods for identifying and working with offenders who are adversely impacted by mixing with other substance-misusing offenders on the order.
• Address the need to review the area approach to the assessment of the motivation of offenders for the DTTO.
• Establish the best methods to disseminate the proposed model to staff and to receive their feedback on its applicability.

Introduction

In response to the growing evidence of a link between problematic drug use and persistent acquisitive offending (Hall et al., 1993, cited in Gossop et al., 2000), a new community sentence - the Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) - was introduced under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The DTTO is an intensive order designed for prolific offenders who are dependent upon or have the propensity to misuse illicit drugs. Suitable offenders must show a willingness to co-operate with the treatment. This high intensity order combines coercive treatment with observed urine testing and reviews in Court, alongside regular contact with probation staff through one-to-one and group sessions.

Emerging evidence has repeatedly shown that central to achieving success on the DTTO is retention on the order (Turnbull et al., 2000; Best et al., 2003; Hough et al., 2003; Turner, 2004). Nevertheless, retaining offenders on DTTOs is complex and problematic. Figures from the initial pilot show that offenders in all three of the sites often failed to meet the requirements of the order and the percentage of orders revoked varied widely from 28% to 60% (Turnbull et al., 2000). Turner (2004) calculated retention rates on a sample of 179 offenders in West Yorkshire and found that only 27% (48 cases) were still attending at the six month mark. It is therefore imperative that efforts are made to increase the number of offenders being retained on DTTOs to avoid a situation where these orders ‘...could become expensive precursors to imprisonment’ (Hough et al., 2003, p6).

Observations from the limited number of qualitative studies point towards variations in terms of delivery on the DTTO. Best et al. (2003) found marked inconsistencies in relation to actions taken by staff as a result of positive urine tests. Interestingly, they found that the DTTO teams who set strict boundaries with regards to testing were those that achieved the most positive results in relation to drug usage and crime at the three month point.

Such inconsistencies are echoed in other research which found that offenders often received conflicting messages from treatment and probation staff in relation to ‘when testing matters’ (Turner 2002, p.4). These differences in delivery and organisation can impact upon the engagement of offenders on...

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1 Retention was calculated by ‘final attendance’ date rather than ‘order termination’ date since using the latter has been proven to give misleading retention data (see Briggs & Turner, 2003).
the order. Ricketts et al. (2002) found delivery and organisation to be important elements of the DTTO to offenders, particularly as there appeared to be links between offenders perceiving the DTTO as being organised and overcoming elements of their own disorganisation.

On a positive note the lack of a structured programme enables a variety of treatment and rehabilitative interventions to be undertaken with offenders, thus increasing the opportunity to tailor the order to suit their varying needs. In spite of this, identifying what works on the DTTO is entangled amid the varied delivery of this relatively unstructured order.

Fundamentally, the aims of the DTTO are the reduction of drug use and drug-related offending although various other factors such as gaining accommodation, attending to health problems and working towards improved job prospects, can take precedence during the course of the order. However, given that the key challenge for DTTO teams is the retention of offenders, this study aimed to investigate the views of offenders, treatment and probation staff within West Yorkshire to better understand what works on the DTTO in terms of offender motivation and engagement.

Methodology

This study drew upon discourse-analytic methodology. This methodology represents a radically different approach to more-commonly used research methods and the findings need to be understood from this perspective. It might be instructive therefore to briefly introduce some of the basics of this approach.

Introducing Discourse Analysis (Discursive Psychology)

By ‘discourse-analysis’, we are referring to a specific approach to social and psychological theory and research expounded in key works such as Potter & Wetherell (1987), Edwards & Potter (1992), Harré & Gillet (1994), and Harré (1998). This form of discourse analysis is also known as ‘discursive psychology’ to assert the point that it is a viable perspective on psychological life rather than just a mode of empirical analysis. Moreover it involves a reworking of fundamental concepts such as truth, objectivity, and knowledge often taken as given in other approaches.

Discourse analysis takes any written or spoken discourse as its data, though actual, transcribed conversations, both naturalistic and from interviews, are the most commonly used. The discourse is taken as a topic in its own right, not as a secondary route to a pre-supposed metaphysical realm beyond, such as inner cognitions in the mind. Thus the discourse is viewed as constructive, rather than reflective, of social and psychological states and processes.

In consequence, analysis is not concerned with accuracy or the truth and falsity of accounts. Indeed the underlying philosophy of discursive psychology argues that much of the ‘stuff’ of human life, such as perceptions, emotions, and interactions, have no material referent – an object or thing in the world
that we can point to. Such things, it is argued, are socially constructed according to complex sets, or repertoires, of discourses; the words *themselves* are the object, process, etc that we are interested in understanding. This is not to deny the ‘real’ world ‘out-there’; clearly an offender without a brain cannot address their offending behaviour, but how such work takes place and to what effect it has taken place, is assessed according to public, discourse-based criteria, not hidden private mental processes, somehow behind the discourse.

Thus it is the discourse that is studied to draw out the key ways that offenders and staff construct the concepts under study, such as engagement and motivation. Such constructions, or ‘talk’ for want of warmer term, differ radically from the variables studied in quasi social experiments. Discourse analysis looks for systematic and recurrent “terms [used] for characterizing and evaluating actions, events, and other phenomena …used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p.149). These systems of terms, or repertoires, cannot be counted or quantified as ‘real’ objects in the world but are nonetheless of crucial importance to how people live their lives and interact with others; discourse, so the theory goes, shapes and gives expression to how we think and feel about ourselves.

**Design**
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with offenders sentenced to a DTTO and with DTTO probation and treatment staff (see Sample below). The interview schedules are available on request. Each offender interviewee had completed at least 3 months of their order, though the average (mean) duration on the order was 4.75 months. All interviews were conducted on either probation or prison premises in private rooms; interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**Sample**
Three samples were used in this study:

1. 21 offenders with DTTOs imposed between 05/01/2001 and 20/08/2001. There were 6 women (29%) and 15 men (71%). All offenders classed their ethnicity as ‘White’. Ages at the time of interview ranged between 20 and 37 years and the average (mean) was 28.85 years. 19 offenders were current and attending their DTTO at the time of the interview; two offenders were interviewed in prison having had their order revoked within 4 weeks of the date of interview. 10 offenders (48%) subsequently had orders terminated for either ‘Order Expired’ or ‘Early Revocation for Good Progress; 11 offenders (52%) had orders terminated for negative reasons, such as ‘Failure to Comply’ and ‘New Conviction’. Offenders were spread across the districts as follows: Bradford – 5 (24%); Calderdale – 4 (19%); Kirklees – 3 (14%); Leeds – 6 (29%); Wakefield – 3 (14%).

2. 6 probation staff: four Probation Officers (Case-Managers) from each of the district DTTO teams, except one district where a Probation Service Officer (PSO) (Case-Worker) was interviewed – as this person
undertook much of the day-to-day offender work – and one district where a PSO was interviewed as well as the PO.

3. 5 treatment staff: one from each of the district DTTO teams. Each team had differing names for the job role, e.g. Criminal Justice Support Worker, Substance Misuse treatment worker. However the work undertaken by the roles was presumed to have been reasonably similar, e.g. one-to-one appointments with offenders, providing treatment group work, etc.

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2 This was because the duties each undertook in that district were distinct and both the PO and the PSO could not provide sufficient information on certain parts of the interview.
1. Offenders Talk About the DTTO

Several key themes relating to how offenders viewed the DTTO emerged from the analysis of the offender transcripts. Elements of these themes overlap but it is useful to separate out key issues of how offenders conceptualised the DTTO as this helps to understand what is effective in retaining them on the order.

There were two key discourses that appeared to underpin the concept of effectiveness on the DTTO. The first of these is relationships with other people, which includes relationships with staff, other offenders, family, and partners. The second is organisation/continuity on the order, which can be further sub-divided into structure/intensity, and activities/new opportunities.

1.1 Relationships

1.1.1 Relationships with staff

Offenders’ talk about engaging with the order was systematically within the context of good relationships with DTTO staff.

1. “I: What are the good things you’d point out about having that support there from her [treatment worker]? How does that sort of help you? O: …you know, to share your problems with. What’s that saying? A problem shared is a problem halved, or something like that isn’t it?” [01OFF1]

2. “[Staff name] took us across on an open day once and we walked round to see which courses we wanted. And they take us up to college as well to try and get us motivated and go up to college” [01OFF2]

3. “…even if I haven’t got an appointment if I come down they speak to me” [01OFF3]

4. “…I had a little slip at first and they had a chat – they just kept pushing me and wanting me to do well. And I felt like if I wasn’t doing well I was letting them down” [05OFF3]

5. “Well you know that you are not on your own, that they are behind you all the way” [04OFF2]

6. “I thought it better to put as much trust into my key worker and probation as they had put into me” [05OFF2]

7. “It is all right, because I can talk to [staff name] – others I can’t talk to…[staff name] she is down to earth, others aren’t” [01OFF1]

Extracts 1-7 show that offenders associated effective engagement on the order with the existence of a two-way interaction with staff which enabled them to share their problems and feel supported by staff. Talk about getting on well with staff, in terms of trust and support and being able to drop in for a chat without appointments, was constructed as being important to achieving

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3 Where dialogue is displayed in extracts, ‘I’ denotes the interviewer and ‘O’ denotes the offender.
success on the order. Extracts 4, 5 and 6 indicate that there is an unwritten ‘agreement’, in terms of reciprocation between staff and offenders that underpins the notion of a ‘good relationship’. Where staff are perceived as providing support and encouragement, offenders appear to reciprocate in terms of showing the same level of trust (as in extract 6), or in trying to do well on the order so as not to let staff down. However, absence of this reciprocated relationship between offenders and staff was viewed negatively and often linked to failing on the order.

Extracts 8 & 9 in Box 1 are examples of negative talk about staff on the DTTO. In extract 8 the offender is talking about being ‘in breach’ early on in the order and attributes this to ‘being honest’, which they feel has not been recognised by staff. The offender perceives staff as not wanting to hear their explanation for the cause of breach. On the one hand, it is a useful account for the offender to use; they can blame staff for their failures! But importantly, offenders systematically place such ‘failings’ in the context of a reciprocated (or otherwise) relationship. This indicates the importance, if not ‘therapeutic power’ of staff relationships to offenders.

Similarly, extract 9 fits in with the ‘reciprocation’ repertoire. The offender is accounting for why he or she would not feel safe talking to a member of staff. This feeling is linked to a perceived unfairness regarding the imposition of a new rule and the lack of an open and reciprocated relationship. It seems important to offenders that staff treat them fairly and with respect. If there is an absence of this then the offender may reciprocate with negative actions which will impact negatively upon offender engagement on the order.

It was clear that the effective relationships between staff and offenders highlighted on page 1 are not instantaneous and take time to develop; extracts 1-4 demonstrate aspects of this development.
1. “I: Have you felt that support from the beginning? Has it taken time to build that relationship up?
   “O: It has taken a bit longer. I knew it was there from the beginning and they are all sound and that. But the longer you are here, the more months you spend, because over every day you do get quite close to the staff here...you get to know them quite well and they do care about us” [01OFF4]

2. “The support is brilliant and I did want that kind of support because I felt as though people were bending over to try and help me, the least I could do was to try and respond and try and do a bit for myself as well and give them a bit back maybe. And I think I have done that quite well” [05OFF2]

3. “I thought it better to put as much trust into my key worker and probation as they had put into me. So I kind of let it all out and gave them the basis of me, of what I am, how I’ve been brought up and stuff like that” [05OFF2]

4. “I: What do you think has helped to make your relationship gel?
   O: Being open, being honest and not holding back. Generally we just clicked really, yes” [05OFF3]

In extract 1 the offender talks about how it has taken time to develop a good relationship with staff, despite knowing that the support was there from the beginning. This would suggest that during the very early stages of the DTTO it is imperative that early contact with staff is positive and welcoming in order to begin the groundwork for effective reciprocal relationships. The reference to staff caring about the offenders is important in how it is linked to a graduation process of ‘getting close’ and ‘getting to know’; for offenders it is as though it takes a bit of time to discover that the support is genuine. This is reinforced in extract 2 with the reference to staff putting in a lot of effort, to which the offender felt they had to reciprocate highlighting how once offenders see this from staff, they will become more motivated as the relationship develops. This is an example of ‘motivation reversal’ whereby an offender with little or no motivation at the beginning of the order undergoes a reversal as the order progresses (see Turner, 2002). Extracts 3 and 4 also reveal that being open and honest are key factors which contribute to the development of effective relationships.

1.1.2 Mixing with other offenders

Talk about relationships, or associations, between offenders was often within the context of the impact that talk about drugs has upon engagement with the order. Whether relationships between offenders had a positive or negative effect was often linked to individual strengths and weaknesses regarding abstaining from drug taking, or the stage at which they were at in terms of treatment and withdrawal from drugs.

1. “…you were meeting people at [location] who were in the same position as you so you realise you are not on your own. I felt proper motivated” [03OFF1]

2. “I looked up to them that were clean. I thought well if they are doing so well I can as well” [03OFF3]
3. “Me and [offender name] get on great with everybody do you know what I mean? We try to help everybody and encourage them as well. We have encouraged quite a few anyway, and a few of the lads as well. I know the lads are buzzing because we are doing well and then they feel bad because they can’t. It gives them inspiration sometimes and helps them” [01OFF2]

4. “It [being in a group] made me start using drugs again. Well it didn’t make me, but it influenced me so greatly…” [04OFF6]

5. “I think just sitting in a group talking about drugs isn’t very constructive full stop” [04OFF6]

6. “If we could talk about sensible things and not drugs all the time. You come on a morning feeling all fresh and dandy, but by the time you leave here all you have had is ‘drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs’. And all that's on your mind then is drugs, it is hard. It is easy getting clean, but it is a hundred times harder to keep clean” [01OFF3]

7. “I mean some of them coming in, they are out of their heads…But I just don’t let it bother me. It can go on too much and then you have got to tell them…I don’t mind being sat in here with them but I wouldn’t go off anywhere with them after. Only the ones who are doing well are allowed to come round with me” [01OFF2]

Extracts 1 & 2 support the idea that having other offenders on the order can be positive in terms of having others who are in the same position as you, which gives offenders a feeling of support. Similarly, offenders who have managed to come off drugs can act as a kind of role model, and can represent something to aspire to.

Extracts 4-6 demonstrate that mixing with other offenders, especially talking about drugs in groupwork sessions can also have a detrimental impact on some offenders. Such interactions and talk are used to account for cravings and the difficulty this individual (in extract 4) has with staying ‘clean’. Nevertheless, extract 7 demonstrates that the presence of ‘drug talk’ or offenders on drugs does not necessarily have a negative impact upon others. This individual, who does not refer to difficulties with cravings, indicates limits and/or boundaries (“…you have got to tell them”; “I wouldn’t go off anywhere with them after”), which serve to create a boundary by which this offender is not negatively affected. It is the construction of such a boundary which may contribute to developing strategies to cope with mixing with other offenders, if not cravings themselves.

Staff may already be aware about the impact that talk about drugs, and offenders on drugs may have on individuals at different stages in the order. By tuning into vulnerable people at vulnerable times they may be able to intervene by offering additional support sessions (for example after groupwork) in order to talk through any cravings and related issues. This may assist offenders to establish new dialogues or ‘self-talk’ of boundaries concerning mixing with other drug-using offenders.
1.1.3 Relationships with family & partners

Relationships with family and partners were also talked about within the context of engaging with the order, often as a motivating factor to do well.

1. “I: And the main reason you applied for it, the reason you said about your daughter?
   O: My daughter mainly yes…We weren’t fit parents to keep hold of our daughter and that really brought it home for us. That really sunk in for us and told us that we are better than this, we are different than this. It is not really what we want to do” [05OFF2]

2. “I: Do you feel you get that support from the DTTO staff here?
   O: Yeah, you do yeah. But I also get it from home as well.
   I: Do you have good support at home?
   O: Yeah.
   I: Do you think that makes a difference to your progress?
   O: Yeah, definitely. Because it is like I am doing it for me and the family do you know what I mean?
   I: Yeah, I see, there is that extra motivation there I suppose?
   O: Yeah, just that extra push yeah” [02OFF4]

3. “With me having [child's name] she is a big push as well. She relies on me for everything as they do and she has been a massive incentive to getting me clean” [05OFF3]

4. “I: It must be difficult to keep that motivation up?
   O: It is because my wife has got the same problem as well so…
   I: Do you find that you can sort of help each other having a partner to share your problems?
   O: I think it is harder…because she doesn't have to come off [drugs]” [03OFF1]

Extracts 1-3 demonstrate that family can be a motivational factor for wanting to get clean from drugs and thus motivating offenders to do well on the DTTO. Family can also give additional support to that which is provided by staff, as discussed in section 1.1. Turner (2004) reports changes in offenders’ views on the importance of their relationships, and the effort they put into maintaining their relationships at the 6 month stage. This supports the idea that DTTO staff can assist offenders to tackle social issues such as rebuilding relationships with family, which may in turn aid the rehabilitation process.

However, similarly to the discussion in section 1.1.1, some relationships with family and/or partners can have a potentially negative impact upon offenders on the order, particularly if a partner or family member is also addicted to drugs, as highlighted in extract 4.

1.2 Organisation/Continuity

Offenders’ talk about the DTTO frequently centred on organisation and continuity of the order. Within this there were two themes which stood out as being important in terms of helping to understand what aspects of
organisation and continuity facilitate offender engagement on the order. These are structure/intensity, and activities/new opportunities.

1.2.1 Structure/Intensity

Offenders talked about the DTTO as being strict and intensive and as something which fills offenders’ days.

1. “I: How did it seem at first when you first got on the programme?  
O: I don’t know, very strict I thought. But once you get stable and you realise that it had to be like that or else people with Heroin you know, you do come up with a mountain of lies that’s unbelievable. So it has to be strict” [05OFF1]

2. “What keeps me coming? I have got to come for one. I have got to be here or prison. I like coming here. Weekends, when I was first getting clean the weekends were hard at first…And we were saying ‘it is not fair, that place should be open on a weekend, they just get us clean through the week, what do we do now?’ We were like lost sheep honestly” [01OFF4]

3. “That’s the downside of it I’d say when you have got time on your hands. When it feels as though you are just coming in for the sake of coming in, I’d say that was the downside of it” [03OFF1]

4. “This Order is supposed to be to get us off drugs to stop us committing crime, cut our crime rate, stop us committing crime, keep us off drugs and get us back into a social life and back into work. And basically get us back into reality. It is not working. It was working like that at first. Now these rules and regulations what he is making up, every other day something happens or ‘can’t do that, that’s a new rule’” [01OFF5]

In extract 1 the offender constructs the DTTO as being strict, but necessarily so due to his/her views on the nature of drug users and their propensity to tell lies. They talk about how, when they became stable, they realised that the order had to be strict to be effective, which suggests that when they were still using they did not find it as easy to accept the demands of the order.

In extract 2 the offender talks about how they have to attend the DTTO since the alternative is prison. However, the offender also states that they like attending the order so it is not only the threat of custody which keeps them on the order but the fact that they enjoy it and feel it to be beneficial. The reference to feeling like a ‘lost sheep’ at weekends is suggestive that the DTTO provides the structure and fills offenders’ time which helps to distract offenders away from drugs and the associated lifestyle. Extract 3 supports the view that offenders like having their time filled by the DTTO. However, the time has to be filled constructively, otherwise the DTTO can be viewed negatively which may impact upon effective offender engagement (see section 1.2.2 ‘Activities/New opportunities’ below).

Alongside the repertoire of the DTTO as constructively filling offenders’ time is the notion of continuity. Extract 4 suggests that there has to be some degree
of consistency and stability on the order, otherwise the equilibrium of the order is disrupted.

This offender is referring to the DTTO as not working (anymore) due to changes in rules and regulations. It seems that it is not the rules and regulations which are causing the problem per se, but changes which have been introduced by a particular member of staff. This can also be seen in section 1.1 (quote 9, Box 1) whereby a similar occurrence is described. Inconsistent behaviour by staff can be seen to impact upon the development of constructive relationships and subsequently effective engagement.

Offenders may prefer stability and continuity on the DTTO as it contrasts to their usual disorganised lifestyle when on drugs. It can therefore be unsettling for them to encounter change or contrasting messages. This also links to developing open and fair relationships, as discussed in section 1.1 ‘Relationships with staff’.

Extracts 5 & 6 in Box 2 also support the view that continuity on the DTTO is important. The offender in extract 5 refers to changes in the number of offenders coming onto the DTTO and states that they ‘…don’t think it works as well…’ and that ‘you never knew if you were going to see somebody again’. This highlights that they enjoyed having a consistent number of familiar faces on the order and that they associated this with the order ‘working’. In extract 6 the offender is talking about the process of Methadone reduction. However, this change is viewed as being subtle and is not imposed unless the offender feels comfortable. This shows how change can occur on the order but a degree of consistency is required so that the change does not have a negative impact upon offender progress.

Box 2

5. “I: When you first got the DTTO what kind of things did you do at the beginning?
O: We used to go out to the gym and that once a week and [location]. But it were just better, because the groups were smaller and same basis all the time. And then when bigger groups are coming, just people getting breached and this and the other, you never knew if you were going to see somebody again. So I don’t think it works as well, as the groups are getting bigger. It was better when they were smaller” [01OFF1]

6. “So every two weeks they will look at reducing you by 5mls or whatever you feel comfortably to be reduced by. But they go through that step-by-step with you; if you are not comfy with that reduction then it won’t happen. It happens when you are comfortable with it, so it is perfectly well set out. And the GP is very understanding as well, she knows that it is a hard thing to do…So every two weeks we will go into the GP and she will put the reduction to us and say ‘how do you feel about that?’ And the frame of mind you are in and the state of health you are in, it shouldn’t be a problem, you should be able to reduce every fortnight and do it quite well” [05OFF2]
1.2.2 Activities/New Opportunities

There was much talk about various kinds of activities that offenders were involved with on the DTTO. These were talked about within the context of keeping busy and helping to take their mind off drugs and in opening up new opportunities. However, it was clear that such activities had to be meaningful if they were to have any lasting impression on staying off drugs. For example, linking in some way with the future, whether this was the immediate future or longer term.

1. “I: What was that like doing these leisure things?
   O: It was all right, because it was different you know, something to look forward to” [01OFF1]
2. “I: Will you try and put something in place [of the DTTO] yourself?
   O: Oh definitely yeah. I wouldn’t leave myself open to anything, I’d definitely put something in its place. Because that’s what they tell you here, you do really need to put something in place. That boredom bit when you are on Heroin and stuff, you do need something in its place. But something good, something that you enjoy” [01OFF2]
3. “They sort of encourage us to train, but it is all good. It is good. And next year I am putting in to do a counselling course in February” [01OFF4]
4. “And it is like we are sat in here, we come here I swear to God you don’t do nothing. I mean you’ve to play games” [03OFF2]
5. “So to be different now, and gaining weight, going back to work and stuff now, it just feels so much better. And for people to realise and to recognise that and say ‘look, you are looking better, you are looking well’ really gives you such a buzz and such a meaning of carrying on. You know, purpose to carry on it really does feel a lot better” [05OFF2]

Extract 2 draws attention to how the DTTO can provide a structure for the offender and that this structure plays an important role in offenders’ thinking about a future ‘normal’ life. Thus it is the combination of the structure and activities to fill it that contribute to offenders’ sense of their anticipated future. Extracts 4 & 5 demonstrate that the activities structuring the DTTO have to be meaningful and engage offenders if they are to play a role in shaping offenders’ future lives.

It was evident that the concept of *a future* is an important one for offenders on the DTTO. Extract 5 represents how this particular offender has progressed and succeeded on the order. Their reference to being ‘different now’ demonstrates that they see themselves as a changed person and can recognise the benefits of new opportunities which have arisen as a result of the DTTO. They now firmly believe that they have ‘...such a meaning of carrying on’ and a ‘purpose to carry on’ (emphasis added) which really epitomizes what the DTTO is trying to achieve.
2. Staff Talk About Motivation and Engagement

2.1 Assessment Stage

When talking about the assessment stage of the DTTO process, both probation and treatment staff tended to view ‘motivation’ as something which resides with the offender, but which is changeable. The absence of any ‘motivation’, as determined by staff, was likely to result in a non-referral for the order.

1. “I: What are the things you look for in determining somebody is suitable from someone who isn’t?
   S: …what we’re looking for really is, first of all being able to attend on time for an appointment. They’ve got to be able to obviously, it’s such an intensive order that if they can’t keep appointments then they’ll breach very, very quickly. So we use the appointment slot kind of process to almost test people’s motivation” [04PSO1]

2. “I: If someone...deselects at that point [at assessment] would you then accept what they say and not refer them for further assessment? Say at the first appointment they said ‘no I don’t want to do that’ would you try and encourage them?
   S: I would explore why. But if they were saying ‘I can’t do 20 hours’ then I wouldn’t refer them on” [02PO1]

3. “…we use motivation interviewing techniques really to assess their motivation and obviously, giving them appointments during the assessments period. And to be honest that’s where most people fall down… and even though they are saying all the right things, deep down we are really not sure” [02PO1]

   S: Often it is just watching you know, these verbal and non-verbal skills and experience – and intuition is a tool too rather than judgement” [02TP1]

In extracts 1 & 3, initial assessment appointments are referred to as a tool for testing offenders’ motivation and reference is made to this being a stage where offenders might “fall down” (emphasis added). This suggests that staff view ‘motivation’ as an entity or thing residing in offenders which can be ‘discussed’ or known. Two key methods for obtaining such knowledge arise. If offenders do not attend they are presumed to lack motivation. However, if they do attend the issue of the ‘offender’s truth’ is contrasted against the ‘officer’s truth’. For example, contrast extracts 2 & 3 where on the one hand the officer will believe the offender who says “I can’t do 20 hours” yet appears to disbelieve an offender who is “saying all the right things” in favour of trust in his or her own version of the ‘truth’ about motivation. If the assessment stage is partly about a test of offenders’ motivation, then perhaps clarity is needed about how staff can undertake such a test. This could suggest on the one hand, that at the pre-order stage, staff are not prepared to encourage offenders who are showing no signs of motivation. On the other, it may be

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4 Where dialogue is displayed in extracts, ‘I’ denotes the interviewer and ‘S’ denotes staff member.
indicative of a commonly held belief that offenders need to be motivated in order to be successfully retained on the order; a belief that is not necessarily supported by offenders (see section 1.1 in the offender section).

2.2 Engagement on the Order

Extract 5 in Box 3 demonstrates the staff view that offenders themselves have to be motivated to change pre-order. Here, talk about motivation is linked to whether offenders have already taken ‘steps’ towards change, for example in moving away from their current lifestyle.

However, in contrast to the view that pre-order motivation resides with offenders, both probation and treatment staff talked about motivation on the order as something residing between staff and offenders. The reference in extract 5 to ‘how do we make it work if they came on the order’ is suggestive of a dynamic relationship between staff and offenders whereby staff play a part in helping offenders to succeed on the order.

Similarly, extracts 6 & 7 reiterate the view that once on the order, staff shift their discourse to one where motivation is not only a changeable property of the offender but also resides in a relational dynamic.

6. “…and it’s about sort of traditional case-work type social work…getting your sleeves rolled up and getting involved in them sorting out their lives and problems” [05PO]
7. “I: What do you see as the aims of a DTTO? S: …it is trying to work with them as to how to stop using heroin. And usually it is about filling the gap and dealing with whatever problems were there in the first place…Yeah, looking again to the future, how they want life to be and step-by-step trying to help them to work towards that. But alongside that, motivating change as well. Because I think you know, some of the people we have lost, they are motivated to a point but they just haven’t been able to continue that motivation. So it is continually trying to work and motivate change all the time as well as helping them work on what we are trying to do” [02PO1]
The above links in with the ‘reciprocation repertoire’ as discussed in the offender section 1.1 whereby offenders constructed success on the order as being linked to effective relationships with staff in terms of trust and support.

Talk about ‘getting involved’ and ‘continually trying to work and motivate change’ was within the context of how staff construct their role in the delivery of the DTTO and was not evident in talk about pre-order motivation. In addition, the reference to looking at the offenders’ future in extract 7 links with how offenders talked about the DTTO in terms of new opportunities (offender section 1.1.2). Offenders often talked about effective engagement on the DTTO within the context of how this linked with their future. Staff talk also orientates towards playing a facilitative role in helping offenders to view their future, and is within the context of what the DTTO is trying to achieve.

Staff also talked about times on the order when there are no specific activities planned for offenders.

8. “I: Do you ever have many occasions where they are here when they are supposed to be but there is nothing actually planned for them? So they have got free time?
S: Yes. They have free time but that’s when we do this sort of mingling one-to-ones” [03TP1]

9. “I: Do you ever get the case when the offenders come in and there is nothing for them to actually do?
S: Well we do quite a lot, but there is always the staff there. Even when the pool table is there nobody should decline the pool table. I bought games in there, nobody should decline the games” [03PO1]

In extract 8 the treatment worker talks about ‘free time’ as being where they do ‘sort of mingling one-to-ones’. This orientates towards a less structured approach to working with offenders, whereas offenders themselves talked positively about having a structured order with meaningful activities, which they associated with effective engagement on the order.

Similarly, extract 9 highlights that there are often occasions where specific activities are not planned, but there are other activities to fill offenders’ hours such as board games and pool. The talk concerning how offenders should not ‘decline the games’ suggests that such activities may be seen as a constructive way to fill offenders’ time. The arising point is that staff might not be as aware of the negative impact that un-meaningful activities, as viewed by offenders, can have on their engagement on the order (see section 1.2.2).
Discussion

This study aimed to investigate how offenders and staff – both probation and treatment - talked about engagement and motivation on the Drug Treatment & Testing Order (DTTO). Using a discourse-analytic methodology, the project sought to understand what works in keeping offenders engaged and motivated on the order. It is important to recognise that this study did not aim to ‘measure’ effectiveness on defined variables such as weekly drug-use or criminal activity. The analytic focus was how offenders and staff talked about effectiveness and engagement; according to discursive theory, this is the arena where the ‘real’ practice goes on.

The sample relates to DTTO practice in late 2001 and early 2002, a period when DTTOs were relatively new. It could be argued that much has changed in the way of practice since then. It is possible that this might be true in some cases, e.g. a district team might now have improved the range of activities available to offenders. However, the retention rates in West Yorkshire did not change markedly from 2002/3 to 2003/4, being 16% and 14% respectively. Figures to date for 2004 have shown a steady increase from 13% in April to 23% in October. Whilst practice may be improving it seems unlikely that issues concerning retention at the time of the interviews will be vastly different to those affecting current practice.

Another issue concerning the sample is that only those who were retained beyond three months were interviewed, potentially skewing the sample. Offenders who drop-out in the first couple of months were thus excluded from this study. The remaining question is whether these offenders are somehow different from those interviewed; would these offenders have said quite different things – drawn upon very different discourses – to those in this sample? This seems unlikely for two reasons. Firstly, just over half of those interviewed failed to successfully complete their order; although they reached the three month stage they cannot be considered such ‘successes’ to adversely impact upon the sample. It is important to remember that discursive methodology does not just look for the positive themes in offenders’ talk but the underlying frames of reference, regardless of how they are valued; ‘negative’ framing can be used by ‘succeeding’ offenders and vice versa. Secondly, Robinson (2003) interviewed DTTO offenders who had breached their orders within the first two months of their orders; many of the themes she found bear relation to those presented above.

Motivation & Engagement on the DTTO

Two key themes underpinned offenders’ talk about the DTTO: Relationships and Organisation/Continuity. Being engaged and motivated were systematically associated with the kind of relationship the offender felt they had with the staff member. This is not as simple as those doing well liking

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5 Using the NPD definition: the number of terminations categorised as ‘Order Expired’ and ‘Early Revocation for Good Progress’, divided by the total number of all terminations, multiplied by 100.
staff and vice versa but offenders placing their success or failure in the context of a developing reciprocated relationship. Two words need to be emphasised: developing and reciprocated.

Even where offenders could see that the staff support was open, facilitative etc. there was still a graduation process of “getting to know” and “building up trust”. The gradual development of relationships with staff thus seems to provide an underlying context to other work being undertaken. It also suggests that it is essential during the first contacts with offenders to maintain a positive, welcoming approach with offenders, even if they appear unbothered, or lacking in motivation; their discourse highlights that they could well be testing out staff motivation!

Staff talk about motivation and engagement on the order constructs the relationship with offenders as an inter-relational dynamic, corresponding to how offenders talk about staff. However, when staff are talking about motivation at the assessment stage, the idea of the dynamic inter-relation is less prominent. Motivation is viewed as something residing with the offender either to be believed or tested somehow.

Once offenders see the commitment and support from staff in the context of the developing relationship, there is a sense they have to reciprocate and become more motivated by the developing relationship. Thus in the process of reciprocation, it would appear that a good working relationship develops whereby the offenders’ motivation is reversed and they want to be open and honest with staff in working towards change. It is thus important that ‘motivation’ is viewed as an inter-relational dynamic between staff and offenders and not a sole property of the offender.

Relationships with other offenders on the DTTO and with offenders’ families were also of importance. Relationships with other offenders primarily concerned talk about drugs and how this was linked to offenders’ accounts of dealing with their cravings. Some offenders who appeared to struggle with their cravings would blame others for talking about drugs, whereas those who seemed to cope better either were not bothered by mixing with others or found it a positive influence through shared experiences or being inspired to work at it. What might be of interest is how those offenders who are not bothered/are positive about mixing with other offenders construct a boundary or limits to their mixing. Notwithstanding other reasons why offenders might find it difficult being in a group, assisting offenders who are struggling to deal with their cravings to construct a similar discursive boundary - “I won’t go off with them afterwards” – in the context of the good working relationship may help increase their engagement in group activities.

This research did not focus on the role of families in offenders’ engagement with their treatment and orders. However the importance of families – partners, children, parents etc. – on offenders’ engagement should not be overlooked. Offenders’ talk about motivation and engagement frequently made mention of external family influences; although these were both positive and negative, it highlights the importance of these issues to offenders and is
perhaps indicative of the secondary support role the DTTO could play in addressing these issues.

So far, we have been discussing the importance of relationships to offenders, with staff, other offenders, and with families. It may be obvious to say that the effectiveness of the work staff can undertake is contingent upon planning and resources, but the second over-arching theme in offenders’ talk about the DTTO was exactly this; we have termed this ‘Organisation/Continuity’. For didactic purposes, it is helpful to think of two sub-themes under this heading: 1) Structure & Stability; 2) Activities & New Opportunities.

The structure, stability, and intensity of the order were important to offenders in using up their spare time or “filling the void left by drugs”. This was talked about alongside the strictness of the order; the strictness however is constructed as a necessary aspect of the order and having to attend does not necessarily mean being forced to attend. Beyond the simple structure of the order, the notion of continuity within this structure was also raised in relation to motivation and engagement. Continuity was in terms of both fair and consistent application of rules and regulations as well as in developing the good working relationship, referred to above. This highlights that where the continuity, structure, or stability of the order is jeopardised, this potentially threatens the development or maintenance of the working relationship with staff.

Although the structure of the order serves to “fill the void” for offenders, it was clear that such activities had to be meaningful to keep offenders motivated and engaged. The activities and/or new opportunities had to play a role in the offender’s changing sense of themselves and their anticipation of a new future. For offenders, it appeared that ‘change’ and a positive sense of ‘carrying on’ were linked to their developing sense of their future. Whilst this developing sense of a new future could be addressed with staff, the actual activities offenders undertake appear to provide a powerful real experience of this. Again, we see the link concerning the relationship between staff and offenders and the available resources; staff may be able to assist offenders build a sense of their anticipated future but if they cannot assist them to actually start living it, then it would seem that their motivation and engagement to continue would drop.

Towards a Model of Motivation & Engagement for Substance-Misusing Offenders

In order to attempt to formalise the above discussion a model of the key themes concerning motivation and engagement in offenders’ and staff’s talk is presented on the next page.

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6 It is important to remember that this model is not intended to be a positivist model with variables which can be tested for cause and effect; it is a model of the key discursive themes associated with offenders’ motivation and engagement.
Figure 1 – A Model of Motivation and Engagement for Interventions With Substance-Misusing Offenders

Activities / New Opportunities

“Filling the void”

Constructive & Meaningful Activities / Opportunities

Planning / Resources

Continuity, Structure, & Stability

Change: Building an anticipated future

Staff

Development over time

Good working relationship

Reciprocation: Motivation as an inter-relational dynamic

Other Offenders

Offenders’ Families

Organisation/Continuity

Relationships
Key:
Circles = Main themes
Squares = Sub-themes
Dotted lines = Association between themes
Double lines = Relationships not directly under staff influence
Arrows = Direction of importance of sub-themes

The model follows the above discussion, starting with the two main themes in the centre and the associated sub-themes indicated by the dotted lines. The right-hand side of the model shows the ‘good working relationship’ bounded by its development over time (stage) and the reciprocative aspect (state) where staff view motivation as an inter-relational dynamic that needs to be worked on and maintained. Above the working relationship is the sub-theme of Continuity, Structure, & Stability as, according to offender discourse, these impact upon the stage and state of the relationship. Below are the two other types of relationships of importance. Although these also have direct links, which exclude staff, it would seem that staff can still have an influence on these areas via their own relationship with the offender.

The left-hand side of the model deals with the organisation and activities side of motivation and engagement. The possibility of activities and new opportunities leads to “filling the void” left by drugs. However, and more importantly, this leads onto engaging offenders with constructive and meaningful activities, working towards positive change. This leads to the bottom of the model where the building of an anticipated future (positive change) is shown in relation to the context of a good working relationship.

The model is purposefully one of both motivation and engagement as this research suggests that you cannot consider one without the other. It is not sufficient to talk about an offender’s motivation to engage with the order without detailed recourse to the stage and state of the working relationship with staff, the structure and continuity of what is being offered, and the type of activities on offer. This is not to mention a whole host of other factors outside of the DTTO which may impact on an offender’s engagement. However, the model also does not claim to cover all possible social factors but is a model of motivation and engagement within the delivery of the intervention.

By placing relationships at the centre, we are emphasising the importance of this aspect to the effectiveness of the intervention. However the ‘good working relationship’ needs to be underpinned by good organisation of the order, facilitating continuity and stability. Although the model does not pay attention to social factors such as housing, medication etc. this does undermine the importance of these things. The aim of this study was not to identify the variables associated with success, e.g. “a methadone script, good housing, and 4 hours a week of art therapy” as it is highly unlikely that such a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution exists. It is hoped that by paying attention to the themes in the model such social factors and the ‘variables of success’ will be discursively discovered and negotiated between individual staff and offenders and unique paths towards positive change will be developed.
Recommendations

Catering for individual offenders in terms of providing activities and new opportunities that are meaningful is of course contingent on resources, planning and good organisation. It might be important that staff both working directly with offenders and those in managerial positions re-appraise the planning for and organisation of a range of resources to be available to offer to offenders.

Maintaining continuity and stability to develop good working relationships with offenders requires some level of continuity and stability in the staffing complement. Team managers might wish to consider how contacts with offenders are managed from the very first assessment appointment through to completion of the order. Factors such as staff sickness, annual leave etc. need to be considered to enable a clear and consistent way of ensuring that the structure and stability of the order is maintained as best as possible.

Staff may already be routinely engaging offenders in talk about their future and doing what they can to tap into available resources to facilitate the development of this. It may be useful for a member of staff such as Practice Managers to review cases relatively early on (depending on individual levels of stabilisation e.g. on their prescription, in new housing) to ascertain what activities/opportunities are being discussed and/or established.

It may be no surprise to staff to hear about the impact that talk about drugs, and offenders on drugs may have on individuals at different stages in the order. By tuning into vulnerable people at vulnerable times they may be able to intervene by offering additional support sessions (for example after groupwork) in order to talk through any cravings and related issues. This may assist offenders to establish new dialogues or ‘self-talk’ of boundaries concerning mixing with other drug-using offenders. Consideration of whether awareness of these issues needs raising and the best methods for doing this could be reviewed by the lead DTTO Manager.

When staff are talking about motivation at the assessment stage, the idea of the dynamic inter-relation between staff and offenders is less prominent. Motivation is viewed as something residing with the offender either to be believed or tested somehow. If the assessment stage is partly about a test of offenders’ motivation, then perhaps clarity is needed about how staff can undertake such a test. This could suggest on the one hand, that at the pre-order stage, staff are not prepared to encourage offenders who are showing no signs of motivation. On the other, it may be indicative of a commonly held belief that offenders need to be motivated in order to be successfully retained on the order; a belief that is not necessarily supported by offenders (see section 1.1 in the offender section). The need for a review of the area approach to the assessment of DTTO offenders could be considered by the lead DTTO Manager.

Lastly, the model presented above is a one step towards developing our understanding of engaging and motivating substance-misusing offenders. If
the model is to have any real value then the next step is to gain feedback from the staff who work day-to-day with these offenders: Is the model useful? Can it be helpfully applied in practice? Does it need amending and where? These are the kind of questions that staff feedback could address in contributing towards the development of this model.

References


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