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**North Liverpool Community
Justice Centre:
Analysis of re-offending rates and
efficiency of court processes**

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Miguel Gonçalves and Catriona Mirrlees-Black**

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Executive summary

Background

The North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (NLCJC), opened in September 2005, was the first and only Community Justice centre¹ to be opened in England and Wales. It brought together a magistrates', youth and Crown court with other criminal justice agencies and a range of problem-solving services (such as drug and alcohol services), operating as a one-stop-shop for tackling offending in the local area.

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the impact of the NLCJC on re-offending and on the efficiency of court processes. The re-offending findings update a previous reconviction analysis of offenders who had gone through the NLCJC in 2006 published by the Ministry of Justice (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2009).

Re-offending results

Offenders who had been through the NLCJC between 2007 and 2009 were matched on a number of individual characteristics to other individual offenders sentenced at a mainstream court in England and Wales. Re-offending analysis was then conducted to determine the re-offending rates of both groups for one year following conviction.

A number of analyses, including sensitivity testing, were conducted on the NLCJC re-offending data. None of the analyses demonstrated evidence of a statistically significant difference in re-offending rates between matched offenders in the NLCJC group and the comparator group in England and Wales. There were also no statistically significant differences found in the frequency of re-offending between these two groups.

There was no evidence that the NLCJC had a positive impact on re-offending for any particular type of offender, according to age, gender, disposal or index offence.²

The evidence did, however, show that offenders given court orders at the NLCJC were more likely to breach the conditions of their order than the comparator group for England and Wales. This difference was statistically significant. It is possible that this difference was due to the close involvement of the police in the work of the court, i.e. that offenders breaching a

¹ Other Community Justice Initiatives (e.g. Salford Community Justice Initiative) were subsequently established but adopted different models to that of the Community Justice Centre.

court order received at the NLCJC were more likely to be apprehended than offenders breaching a court order received elsewhere.

A number of potential explanations have been raised for the re-offending results, such as local differences in the public propensity to report crime, policing practices or conviction ratios, quicker processes in the NLCJC or higher re-offending rates prior to the introduction of the NLCJC. However, no clear evidence was found to support any of the potential explanations.

Efficiency results

The magistrates' court offence mix at the NLCJC differed from the mix of cases heard at mainstream magistrates' courts in England and Wales. There was a lower proportion of summary motoring offences (9.8% at the NLCJC compared to 42.9% nationally between 2008 and 2010) and a higher proportion of drug offences (27.6% at the NLCJC compared to 3.3% nationally in 2008/9).

In comparison with other magistrates' courts in England and Wales, the magistrates' court caseload dealt with by the NLCJC awarded a higher proportion of custodial sentences, community sentences and conditional discharges, and a lower proportionate use of fines.

The average time from offence to conviction was quicker for offenders at the NLCJC (61 days) compared to offenders matched on a number of criteria, including offence type, in mainstream magistrates' courts in England and Wales (73 days). However, this difference was not statistically significant.

There are indications that the NLCJC was able to reduce the number of hearings in trial cases. On average, magistrates' cases that went to trial at the NLCJC had fewer hearings than elsewhere in the country. In 2010, the average number of hearings per case for trials was 2.2 at the NLCJC compared to an average of 2.7 hearings in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. When controlling for offence type, such as violent offences, the results also indicated that the NLCJC was able to reduce the number of hearings in trial cases when compared with other magistrates' courts.

² The index offence is the offence the offender committed in order to be included in either the NLCJC or the comparison cohort.

Data from the NLCJC showed that 64% of offenders dealt with pleaded guilty at the first hearing. The figure at magistrates' courts across England and Wales is 43%. However, there are risks with comparing these two figures. We would expect the NLCJC, due to the mix of cases it deals with, to have a higher guilty plea rate than other magistrates' courts in England and Wales. Therefore, we cannot be sure that the higher early guilty plea rate is as a result of the specific activities at the NLCJC.

Over all magistrates' trials in 2008, 2009 and 2010 combined, the NLCJC had a lower proportion of effective trials (35.8% at the NLCJC compared to 43.4% in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales), a lower proportion of ineffective trials (14.9% at the NLCJC compared to 18.3%) and a higher proportion of cracked trials (49.3% at the NLCJC compared to 38.3%). The higher rate of cracked trials at the NLCJC suggests that resources and time may be being wasted in preparing cases that are subsequently closed on the day of trial. This picture remained broadly consistent when comparing the proportions of effective, ineffective, and cracked trials by offence type.

The majority of cracked cases at the NLCJC were classed as such due to a late guilty plea being entered for the first time by the defence; the percentage for the NLCJC was 25.6% compared to 20.6% in England and Wales. The second most common reason for a cracked trial at the NLCJC was where the prosecution ended the case due to a witness being absent or withdrawing from giving evidence at trial (9.2% of all trials at the NLCJC compared to 4.8% in England and Wales). It is possible that wider area issues (for example, witness attendance more generally in the Liverpool area) could be having an impact on these results. Another factor which could also have affected these findings is the prevalence of domestic violence cases heard at the NLCJC.

Conclusions

There was no evidence that the NLCJC was any more effective in reducing re-offending than other courts.

Offenders receiving a court order at the NLCJC were more likely to breach the conditions of their order than offenders receiving court orders elsewhere. However, this might have been due to the close involvement of the police in the work of the court which may have meant that offenders in the NLCJC area who breached their orders were more likely to be apprehended than offenders elsewhere.

The NLCJC showed some positive results in terms of efficiency – there was an indication that the time from offence to conviction was shorter than the national average, although this difference was not statistically significant; and, fewer hearings per case at the NLCJC went to trial compared to the national average. However, there was evidence of inefficiency at the court – there were a higher proportion of cracked trials at the NLCJC compared to national figures.

There were a number of additional outcomes that the NLCJC aimed to achieve, for example, involving local people and building confidence amongst the local community. Previous research (McKenna, 2007; Mair and Millings, 2011) found that local community awareness of what the NLCJC was doing to repair harm to the wider community was low, and that a greater focus on community engagement would be helpful. These outcomes were not explored in this evaluation.

1. Background

1.1 Community Justice

The concept of Community Justice focuses on delivering a more holistic approach to offender management through providing a one-stop shop for offenders in a local community. Criminal Justice agencies (i.e. the police, Crown Prosecution Service, probation, youth offending team and the court service) work in partnership with support services and community groups to address the problems presented by offenders which may be driving their offending behaviour. The focus is on working closely with the local community and relevant agencies to address offending and its associated problems in their local area.

Some of the first Community Justice courts originated in the United States where the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, New York, was one of the first to open in 2000. This model formed the basis for the development of the Community Justice Centre in North Liverpool.

Using learning from Red Hook to inform the development of Community Justice in England and Wales, the Green Paper on Engaging Communities in Criminal Justice (Criminal Justice System, 2009) identified the eight principles of Community Justice as:

- **Courts connecting to the community.** There should be significant liaison between the courts and the local community so that the community is able to put forward its views, and the court has a view of the wider context of the crime.
- **Justice seen to be done.** Better information about the criminal justice services so that local people have the opportunity to put forward their views on the way offending is tackled. Compliance with the court's orders or other penalties should be seen and recognised by the community.
- **Cases handled robustly and speedily.** Harnessing the combined potential of a range of agencies working together, meaning increased speed and ensuring offenders begin sentences promptly.
- **Strong independent judiciary.** Enabling the judiciary to lead the problem-solving approach and maintain oversight of offenders' progress after sentence.
- **Solving problems and finding solutions.** Making use of a range of available service providers in order to tackle the underlying causes of offending. Problem-solving can operate both at community level – tackling safety concerns raised by local people – and also when dealing with individual offenders at court.

- **Working together.** A team approach to decision-making and dealing with offenders. Ensuring that a range of agencies, necessary for problem-solving, are available to the court, delivering an end-to-end service to offenders, victims and the community.
- **Repairing harm and raising confidence.** Seeking the views of the community on what projects should be carried out by offenders on unpaid work. These unpaid work projects should then be badged once completed so the community can see what has been achieved.
- **Reintegrating offenders and building communities.** Improving social bonds and cohesion within the community. Developing pathways to support the reintegration of offenders back into the community.

1.2 The North Liverpool Community Justice Centre

The North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (NLCJC), opened in September 2005, was the first Community Justice initiative to be opened in England and Wales. The NLCJC brought together a magistrates', youth and Crown court with other Criminal Justice agencies and a range of problem-solving services,³ operating as a one-stop shop for tackling offending in the local area. The NLCJC covered the Local Authority areas of Anfield, Everton, County and Kirkdale in Liverpool; offenders who lived in these areas and committed a crime that fell under the inclusion criteria of the NLCJC were dealt with there rather than in mainstream courts. (All offences were heard at the NLCJC with the exception of sexual offences and murder for juvenile offenders, and indictable only offences, summary road traffic offences, sexual offences and child abuse cases for adult offenders.) In addition to the features of Community Justice described above, the NLCJC also featured a single, highly visible judge who, where possible, heard all cases at the NLCJC to provide consistency in decision-making and enhance accountability through continuity.

Following the opening of the NLCJC, twelve new Community Justice pilot sites were set up using a different model to the NLCJC,⁴ but broadly based on the principles of Community Justice (including the Salford Community Justice Initiative which began operating in November 2005 at Salford magistrates' court). However, these pilots are no longer running in the same

³ Problem-solving services included, for example, drug and alcohol services, housing and Citizens' Advice Bureau. Offenders who presented a problem associated with offending were referred to the relevant agencies on site.

⁴ The NLCJC was the only pilot model that was closely based on Red Hook in the United States in that it operated from a designated building (separate to an existing court) and housed other criminal justice agencies as well as problem-solving agencies on the same site. Other models, such as the Salford Community Justice Initiative, were delivered from existing courts and/or did not feature co-location of problem-solving services nor did they follow the single judge model.

format and the NLCJC remains the only model of its type in existence in England and Wales.

1.3 Previous research findings

Previous efficiency findings and process evaluation findings

Findings from a process evaluation of the NLCJC (McKenna, 2007) used interviews with staff and management information to provide indications of increased efficiency in the court proceedings at the NLCJC compared to a national average. For example, on average the NLCJC had fewer hearings per case⁵ compared to the national average. This indicated that cases in the NLCJC were dealt with more quickly than in mainstream courts in England and Wales.

In addition, interviews with staff and offenders found respondents were generally positive about their experiences in the court and that they felt the problem-solving approach could have a positive impact on improving compliance with court orders and reducing re-offending. However, no quantitative analysis of re-offending was conducted as part of this study.

Previous re-offending analysis findings

An initial evaluation of reconviction rates was conducted on offenders who were sentenced at the NLCJC and Salford Community Justice Initiative in 2006 (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2009) to assess the impact of Community Justice on re-offending. Offenders who had been sentenced at the Community Justice courts were compared with offenders in Greater Manchester who had been individually matched on a range of background characteristics associated with offending. There was no statistically significant difference between offenders sentenced at the Community Justice courts and those sentenced in mainstream courts: 37.0% of offenders were reconvicted within one year in the comparison group of Greater Manchester, compared with the Community Justice Initiatives in North Liverpool (38.7%) and Salford (38.3%). The study also found that those in the NLCJC and Salford Community Justice Initiative were significantly⁶ more likely to breach their sentence conditions than those in Greater Manchester.

The research reported here updates these early evaluations, now that sufficient time has elapsed to establish working practices and develop the necessary working relationships within the NLCJC.

⁵ An average of 2.2 hearings per case compared to a regional average of 2.8 (taken from management data supplied by the Ministry of Justice, March 2007).

⁶ Statistical significance of $p < 0.05$.

2. Impact of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre on re-offending

The aim of this project was to assess the impact of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (NLCJC) on:

- the subsequent re-offending rates of offenders; and
- the efficiency of court processes

To assess the impact of the NLCJC on re-offending, offenders who were sentenced at the NLCJC between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2009 were matched at an individual level with an offender sentenced at another court in England and Wales.⁷ An analysis was conducted to determine the re-offending rates of both groups for one year following conviction. The methodology used for analysing re-offending at the NLCJC was consistent with the method used as standard by the Ministry of Justice when analysing re-offending.⁸

When analysing reconviction rates, it is only **proven** re-offending that is captured (where a conviction is received at court for the re-offence). In addition, the re-offence must have been committed within the follow-up period, and the conviction must follow either within the follow-up period, or in a further six months to allow time for the offence to be proven in court (Ministry of Justice, 2010a). It is therefore possible that any differences in **actual** re-offending may not be accurately represented in this analysis. However, for this to have occurred, the relationship between actual and proven re-offending would need to differ between the NLCJC and comparator group.

An initial sample of 1,444 unique offenders from the NLCJC was available to be included in this analysis.⁹

To ensure that as many offenders as possible whose cases were heard at the NLCJC were matched to individual offenders in comparator courts, offenders sentenced at all other courts in England and Wales during the same period were made available for possible selection as a comparison. The use of England and Wales as the comparison group removed the possibility of individual area effects in the comparison group where, for example, one area of

⁷ Offenders sentenced at courts in the NLCJC building, at any time previously, were excluded from the comparator group.

⁸ For a detailed explanation of the Ministry of Justice methodology for analysing re-offending rates, please see: Ministry of Justice (2010a), *Re-offending of adults: Results from the 2008 cohort. England and Wales*.

⁹ Annex A describes the matching process in more detail.

the country may have been performing particularly well (or badly) in comparison with the national picture thus skewing the results.

Offenders in the NLCJC were matched to offenders in England and Wales using all of the following criteria:

- Exact match on offender's age (in years) at the index date;¹⁰ and
- Exact match on the total number of previous convictions; and
- Exact match on the Home Office offence code¹¹ for the index offence; and
- Exact match on index disposal;¹² and
- Exact match on gender; and
- Exact match on ethnicity; and
- Conviction date for the index offence differs at most by 90 days for offenders receiving a non-custodial sentence or prison release date differs at most by 90 days for offenders receiving a custodial sentence.

The above matching criteria were used to allow for control of possible factors other than the NLCJC which could have influenced the likelihood of re-offending. All of these criteria had to be satisfied to constitute an exact match. The matching criteria used were consistent with those used as standard by the Ministry of Justice as when conducting other re-offending analyses.¹³ Using these criteria, a total of 814 offenders (56%) in the NLCJC group were matched exactly to comparison offenders in England and Wales.¹⁴

Re-offending rates were calculated for offenders in both the NLCJC and the comparison groups (England and Wales) (Table 2.1). The higher re-offending rates may have been attributable to the non-matched group containing more prolific offenders than the matched group. The reason for this was that offenders with a higher number of previous offences are more difficult to match on the exact number of previous offences.

¹⁰ The index date is the date of the court conviction for offenders receiving a non-custodial sentence or the prison release date for offenders receiving a custodial sentence.

¹¹ There are around 3,000 offence codes on the Police National Computer to reflect all possible offences committed.

¹² Index disposal refers to the *type* of disposal given only (i.e. discharge (absolute or conditional); otherwise dealt with; fine; community sentence; suspended sentence; or custodial sentence); it does not include a match on the requirements (e.g. supervision requirement, accredited programme requirement) or on the length of the order/sentence.

¹³ For a detailed explanation of Ministry of Justice matching techniques, please see: Ministry of Justice (2010b), *Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis*.

¹⁴ Annex A describes the matching process in more detail.

Some sensitivity analyses were conducted to widen the criteria for a match by extending the parameters for the number of previous offences. Allowing the number of previous convictions to vary within 10% led to a substantial increase in matching. However, this produced the same overall re-offending results.¹⁵

While we can still be confident in the matched re-offending rates and that the findings of this group are broadly representative of the offender population in the NLCJC (given that the re-offending rates for the matched sample (41.3%) and the overall re-offending rate for the NLCJC group (43.6%) are broadly similar), it should be noted that the re-offending rates of the NLCJC matched sample were slightly lower than the overall group due to not being able to match all of these more prolific cases. A further consideration of the matched and non-matched groups can be found in Annex A.

Table 2.1: One-year re-offending rates

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended within one year	One-year re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences within one year	Number of re-offenders within one year (breaches only)	One-year breach rate	Average age at index offence
Overall NLCJC	1,444	629	43.6%	1.60	390	27.0 %	29.2
Matched							
NLCJC	814	336	41.3%	1.38	192	23.6%	26.2
National (comparison)	814	306	37.6%	1.31	135	16.6%	26.2
Non-matched							
NLCJC	630	293	46.5%	1.90	198	31.4%	33.2

Analysis showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the re-offending rates in the matched NLCJC group (41.3%) and the comparator group in England and Wales (37.6%)¹⁶ (Table 2.1).¹⁷

There was also no statistically significant difference between the average number of re-offences in the NLCJC group (1.38 re-offences) and the comparison group (1.31 re-offences).

¹⁵ As this analysis reduced the confidence in the robustness of the match and the methodology is not consistent with other re-offending analyses in the Ministry of Justice, it is not presented in this report.

¹⁶ p=0.33.

There was, however a statistically significant difference¹⁸ between the breach rates of the two groups: offenders given court orders at the NLCJC were more likely to breach the conditions of their order than the comparator group for England and Wales (23.6% in the NLCJC group and 16.6% in the comparison group).

Analysis also identified the time to re-offend for both groups. This revealed a non-statistically significant¹⁹ difference of approximately ten days (an average of 132 days in the NLCJC compared to 122 days) for the matched groups. For the non-matched groups, this difference was smaller (an average of 126 days in the NLCJC group compared to 122 days). There was therefore no evidence of a significant improvement in the time to re-offend for the NLCJC group compared to those in mainstream magistrates' courts in England and Wales.

Breakdown of re-offending rates

To assess whether the NLCJC was having an effect for different groups of the offender population, the findings were explored to look at possible differences²⁰ for: juvenile and adult offenders; male and female offenders; index offence type; index disposal type; and prolific offenders²¹ and non-prolific offenders.

Juvenile and adult offenders

Table 2.2 presents a comparison of re-offending rates for juvenile and adult offenders.²² As with the overall one-year re-offending rates, there was no statistically significant difference in re-offending rates between adult offenders sentenced at the NLCJC (36.1%) and in the comparison group (33.2%)²³ or between juveniles sentenced at the NLCJC (62.5%) and in the comparison group (55.6%).²⁴ No statistically significant differences between the NLCJC groups and comparison groups were found for frequency of re-offending for adults and juveniles. However, the breach rate for adults in the NLCJC was statistically significantly²⁵ different to the breach rate for adults in the comparison group.

¹⁷ Re-offending rates were also measured over a two-year period following conviction. As with the one-year re-offending analysis, the two-year analyses showed no evidence that the NLCJC had an impact on re-offending rates.

¹⁸ $p < 0.01$. Breach rates are the rate at which offenders breach the conditions of a court order.

¹⁹ $p = 0.59$.

²⁰ It was not possible to look at the re-offending rates by ethnicity as the overwhelming majority of offenders in the NLCJC were White North European (98%), meaning that any breakdown would produce too small numbers in other ethnicity categories to make any meaningful comparison.

²¹ Prolific offenders were classed as those who had five or more previous convictions. Non-prolific offenders were those who had fewer than five previous convictions.

²² Adult offenders are offenders aged 18 or over at the time of their index offence.

²³ $p = 0.45$.

²⁴ $p = 0.58$.

²⁵ $p < 0.01$.

Table 2.2: One-year re-offending rates for juvenile and adult offenders

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended within one year	One-year re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences within one year	Number of re-offenders within one year (breaches only)	One-year breach rate	Average age at index offence
Adults (matched)							
NLCJC	654	236	36.1%	1.17	146	22.3%	28.8
National (comparison)	654	217	33.2%	1.04	93	14.2%	28.8
Adults (non-matched)							
NLCJC	585	269	46.0%	1.89	184	31.5%	34.6
Juveniles (matched)							
NLCJC	160	100	62.5%	2.21	46	28.7%	15.6
National (comparison)	160	89	55.6%	2.43	42	26.3%	15.6
Juveniles (non-matched)							
NLCJC	45	24	53.3%	2.02	14	31.1%	14.9

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

Male and female offenders

Seventy-six (9%) of the matched sample were female offenders. Of the female offenders, 27 in the NLCJC sample (35.5%) re-offended compared to 26 in the comparison female group (34.2%)²⁶ (Table 2.3). This difference was not statistically significant, nor was the difference in the frequency of re-offending between matched females in the NLCJC sample and the comparison group. For male offenders (n=738), the re-offending rates for the matched groups were 41.9% (n=309) in the NLCJC group compared to 37.9% (n=280) in the comparison group.²⁷ Again, neither this difference nor the difference in the frequency of re-offending between matched males in the NLCJC sample and the comparison group were statistically significant.

²⁶ p=1.

²⁷ p=0.33.

Table 2.3: One-year re-offending rates for male and female offenders

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended within one year	One-year re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences within one year	Number of re-offenders within one year (breaches only)	One-year breach rate	Average age at index offence
Males (matched)							
NLCJC	738	309	41.9%	1.42	174	23.6%	26.2
National (comparison)	738	280	37.9%	1.32	120	16.3%	26.2
Males (non-matched)							
NLCJC	517	243	47.0%	1.87	160	30.9%	32.8
Females (matched)							
NLCJC	76	27	35.5%	0.96	18	23.7%	25.8
National (comparison)	76	26	34.2%	1.29	15	19.7%	25.8
Females (non-matched)							
NLCJC	113	50	44.2%	2.04	38	33.6%	34.7

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

Index disposal

Re-offending rates were also compared by index disposal (Table 2.4) to explore whether there was any effect on the re-offending rates of offenders more likely to have received problem-solving in their disposal²⁸. For example, those who received conditional discharges, community orders, suspended sentences and custodial sentences could be less likely to re-offend in the NLCJC group than the comparison as the NLCJC group should have received problem-solving services²⁹ if they received these disposals.

²⁸ One of the distinctive features of the NLCJC was in ensuring that a range of services, necessary for problem solving, were readily available to the court.

²⁹ The collation of data on whether an offender received problem-solving services was not consistent and, although recorded in some cases, was not consistently recorded for all. It was therefore not possible to look at the comparable impact on re-offending of offenders who received problem-solving services compared to offenders who did not.

Table 2.4: One-year re-offending rates by index disposal

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended within one year	One-year re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences within one year	Number of re-offenders within one year (breaches only)	One-year breach rate	Average age at index offence
Index disposal NLCJC (matched offenders)							
Conditional discharge	120	53	44.2%	1.36	33	27.5%	25.2
Fine	314	111	35.4%	1.12	36	11.5%	29.5
Community orders	315	140	44.4%	1.50	90	28.6%	22.8
Suspended sentence	38	14	36.8%	1.37	25	65.8%	29.7
Custody	22	15	68.2%	2.95	*	*	27.3
Index disposal comparison (matched offenders)							
Conditional discharge	120	44	36.7%	1.22	13	10.8%	25.2
Fine	314	100	31.8%	0.99	21	6.7%	29.5
Community orders	315	127	40.3%	1.60	77	24.4%	22.8
Suspended sentence	38	13	34.2%	0.82	*	*	29.7
Custody	22	19	86.4%	3.32	13	59.1%	27.3
Index disposal NLCJC (non-matched offenders)							
Conditional discharge	118	55	46.6%	1.75	31	26.3%	34.5
Fine	131	52	39.7%	1.21	15	11.5%	34.5
Community orders	169	75	44.4%	1.58	55	32.5%	32.2
Suspended sentence	64	19	29.7%	1.08	35	54.7%	33.9
Custody	131	85	64.9%	3.45	56	42.7%	32.1

*Figures removed where there were ten or fewer offenders as low numbers make the data unreliable for interpretation.

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

Re-offending rates for matched offenders who received community orders were not significantly different in the NLCJC group (44.4%) compared to the matched comparison group (40.3%). This finding is therefore in line with the overall re-offending rates for all matched offenders. If all those on community orders received problem-solving services, this would suggest that this was not having an impact on reducing re-offending.

Index offence

Re-offending rates were also compared by index offence³⁰ to explore whether the NLCJC appeared to be more effective for specific offence types. A full breakdown of re-offending rates by index offence can be found in Annex B, Table B.1. Re-offending rates in the NLCJC

were higher than in the comparison group for offenders convicted of possessing/supplying drugs and for those convicted of public order offences but lower for those convicted of violence and lower for those convicted of drink driving. However, once broken down by index offence, the numbers were too small to detect whether any differences were likely to be real or whether they resulted from chance.

Prolific and non-prolific offenders

Re-offending rates were also compared between those offenders who had five or more previous offences and those who had fewer than five previous offences (Table 2.5) to explore whether the NLCJC appeared to be more effective for those offenders who were more or less prolific. Re-offending rates in the NLCJC were higher than in the comparison group for both the group of offenders with five or more previous offences and the group of offenders with fewer than five previous offences. However, the numbers were too small to detect whether any differences were likely to be real or whether they resulted from chance.

Table 2.5: Re-offending rates for offenders with five or more previous offences and those with fewer than five previous offences

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended	Re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences	Number of re-offenders (breaches only)	Breach rate	Average age at index offence
5 or more previous offences (matched)							
NLCJC	413	207	50.1%	1.81	121	29.3	27.0
National (comparison)	404	201	49.8%	1.85	95	23.5	26.9
5 or more previous offences (non-matched)							
NLCJC	492	260	52.8%	2.25	176	35.8	34.6
Fewer than 5 previous offences (matched)							
NLCJC	401	129	32.2	0.94	71	17.7	25.3
National (comparison)	410	105	25.6	0.78	40	9.8	25.5
Fewer than 5 previous offences (non-matched)							
NLCJC	138	33	23.9	0.66	22	15.9	28.1

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

³⁰ The category of index offence was determined by the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS) category of offence.

What might have caused these re-offending results?

A limitation of comparing re-offending rates is that they may be affected by a number of factors that are not directly related to the offending behaviour of the individuals.

For the purpose of the re-offending analyses conducted in this report, offenders have been matched on a number of variables, including, gender, age, previous convictions, index offence etc. However, this approach is limited as not all relevant offender and case characteristics were available, including some aggravating and mitigating factors, such as offender needs (employment or accommodation status, for example) (Ministry of Justice, 2010b).

In addition, it was not possible to break down and separately analyse re-offending rates for offenders who had received particular interventions or other bespoke NLCJC services as the management information did not record this level of detail.

We consider below whether North Liverpool differs from other areas in terms of issues such as variations in the local reporting of crime, local policing practices, and conviction ratios. We then consider whether the re-offending comparisons could be affected by increased court efficiency. Finally, we assess trends in re-offending rates from prior to NLCJC being set up to consider whether NLCJC has had any discernible impact on offending in the local area

Variations in local reporting of crime?

The best measure of crime is the Crime Survey for England and Wales³¹ which asks victims directly about their experience of crime. However, due to small sample sizes, this does not provide sufficiently robust measures of crime at as local a level as North Liverpool and also does not cover crimes where there is no easily identifiable victim such as most drug offences. Without this it is not possible to say whether public propensity to report crime differs in North Liverpool from elsewhere.

³¹ *The British Crime Survey (BCS) is now known as the Crime Survey for England and Wales to better reflect its geographical coverage. While the survey did previously cover the whole of Great Britain it ceased to include Scotland in its sample in the late 1980s. There is a separate survey – the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey – covering Scotland. Given the transfer of responsibility for the survey to ONS, it was decided that the name change would take effect from 1 April 2012.*

Police recorded crime only includes crimes that were reported to the police and crimes they have detected. An analysis of the North Liverpool³² crime rates between 2004/5 and 2009/10 per 1,000 of the population, compared to Greater Manchester, London Metropolitan and England and Wales, found that they were higher in North Liverpool for violence against the person, drugs and shoplifting offences.³³ Furthermore, drug offences as a proportion of all crime committed were also consistently higher in North Liverpool compared to other areas: in 2008/09, 14% of all recorded crime in North Liverpool were drug offences, compared to 9% in London Metropolitan police, 4% in Greater Manchester and an average of 5% for England and Wales. This could reflect a greater propensity for the public in this area to report these types of offences or could reflect the fact that these offences are simply more prevalent in this area. However, having a higher number of particular offences (e.g. drugs) in the North Liverpool area would not be expected to affect the re-offending analysis because of the matching process used.³⁴

Differences in policing practices?

A further potential impact on re-offending rates at the NLCJC might be local policing practices that differ to elsewhere.

Due to the close involvement of the police in the work of the court, it could be hypothesised that the police may have been more likely to apprehend and charge any re-offenders who had previously been to the NLCJC, making re-offending rates at the NLCJC higher than elsewhere.

The significantly higher breach rates at the NLCJC could have been as a result of the police being more likely to apprehend any offenders in breach of the conditions of a court order received at the NLCJC. However, it was not possible to verify that higher breach rates at the NLCJC were directly attributable to local policing practices.

³² North Liverpool in this analysis refers to the police Basic Command Unit of Liverpool North and therefore includes more wards than were able to refer to the NLCJC. Therefore, the findings from this analysis should be treated as indicative of the situation in the wards able to refer to the NLCJC as there may be some variation in the wards referring to the NLCJC.

³³ This data was taken from the Crime in England and Wales publication, produced annually by the Home Office. Publications used in this analysis were from 2005 to 2010 (inclusive). The authors are grateful to the Home Office for supplying additional data not included in these publications.

³⁴ Offenders were matched exactly on their index offence, meaning that there would be no impact of the different offence mix at the NLCJC.

Sanction detection³⁵ rates in North Liverpool compared to similar regions in England and Wales were also considered as this may have indicated differences in policing practices. Drug offences and shoplifting offences in particular were considered as they are arguably more likely to be detected through proactive policing, and are offences for which the police have some discretion on whether to charge or deal with less formally. This analysis (see Annex C) showed that sanction detection rates for drug offences and shoplifting offences in North Liverpool were generally higher when compared to rates in comparison areas between 2004/05 and 2010/11. For example, in 2008/09 the sanction detection rate for drug offences was 98% in North Liverpool compared to 94% in Greater Manchester and the Metropolitan Police area and an average of 95% in England and Wales as a whole. However, on analysis of the *types* of sanctions imposed for drug offences, North Liverpool generally gave fewer charges and summons and more out of court disposals than the average for Greater Manchester and England and Wales. This therefore suggests that while North Liverpool may have been more likely to record a sanction for drug offences than elsewhere, the types of sanctions given were, on average, more likely to be out of court disposals than charges or summons. As lower level sanctions (such as out of court disposals) were not included as a re-offence in the re-offending analysis,³⁶ it is not likely that police activity regarding drug offences had an impact on the findings of the re-offending analysis of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre.

Higher conviction ratios?

It could be hypothesised that, due to the NLCJC model, if conviction ratios were higher at the NLCJC this might also impact on the re-offending findings. However, analysis of conviction ratios at the NLCJC compared to ratios in England and Wales in 2010 has shown that overall conviction ratios were, on average, lower than the average ratios in magistrates' courts in England and Wales (Figure 2.1): the average overall conviction ratio for NLCJC was 78.7% compared to an average of 83% in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales.

³⁵ A sanction detection is any notifiable offence dealt with and resulting in a charge, summons, caution, taken into consideration, penalty notice for disorder or formal warning for cannabis possession. A sanction detection differs from a 'non-sanction detection' whereby an offence is recorded and counted as 'cleared up' but where no further action is taken, e.g. if the alleged offender dies. Similarly not all sanction detections will result in a conviction, e.g. where a charge or summons fails to result in a conviction through the defendant being found not guilty in court.

³⁶ Only court convictions were included in the re-offending analysis.

Figure 2.1: Conviction ratio by offence for NLCJC and England and Wales in 2010

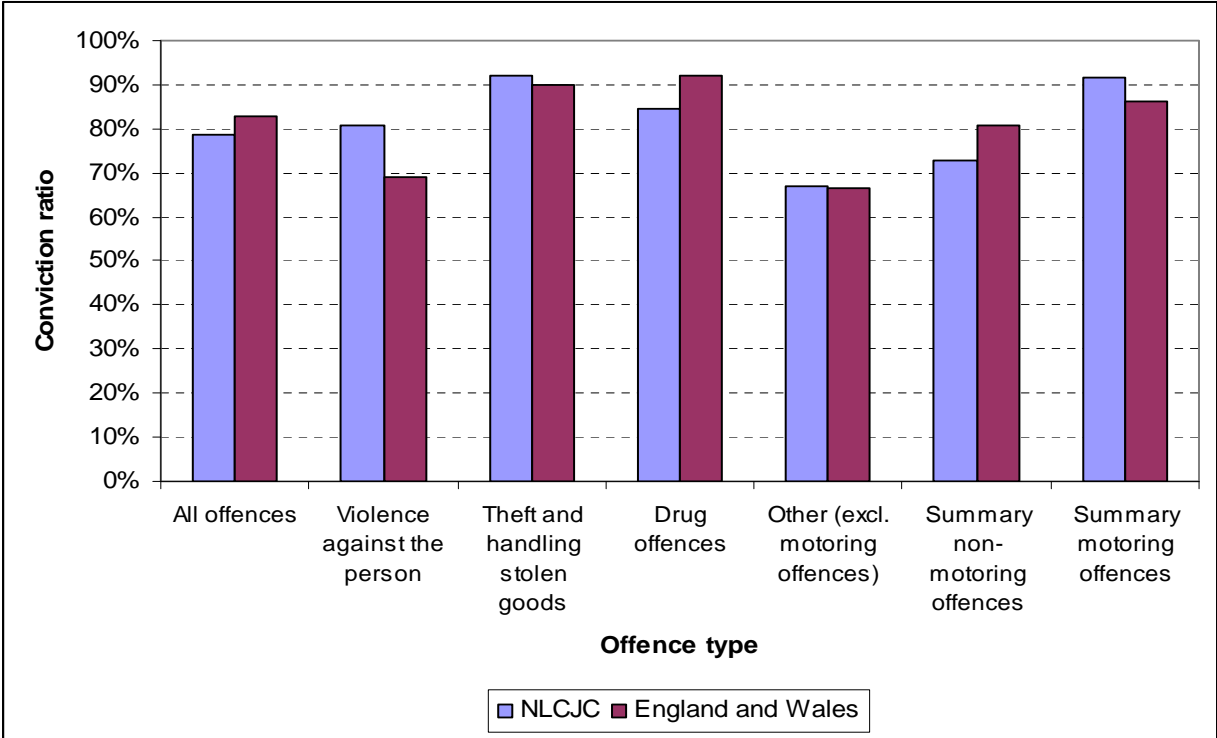


Figure 2.1 presents the conviction ratios for all offences and offences committed by 50 or more people during 2010 at the NLCJC (a full breakdown of conviction ratios by offence type can be found in Annex B, Table B.2).

While conviction ratios are broadly similar for individual offences, the lower overall conviction ratio for NLCJC appears to be predominantly attributable to the lower conviction ratio for drug offences (84.4% at NLCJC compared to an average of 92.2% in magistrates’ courts in England and Wales) and summary non-motoring offences (72.7% at the NLCJC compared to 80.7% in England and Wales); summary non-motoring and drug offences were also the highest in volume in the NLCJC caseload.

Given that offenders at the NLCJC were, on average, less likely to be convicted at the NLCJC compared to other courts, it seems unlikely that conviction at the NLCJC was having an impact on the re-offending rates.

Quicker processes?

An additional explanation for why re-offending rates from the NLCJC might be slightly (but not significantly) higher than those for matched offenders is that the efficiency of court processes (for example, fewer hearings per case compared to the national average) could be

inflating the re-offending rates in the NLCJC. For example, if court processes in the NLCJC were quicker than elsewhere, it could be hypothesised that offenders that would have been captured in the two-year re-offending rates elsewhere are being captured in the one-year re-offending rates in the NLCJC; similarly those who would have been captured in the three-year re-offending rates elsewhere could be captured in the two-year re-offending rates at the NLCJC.

It is not possible to test this hypothesis; however, given that the majority (75%) of offenders who re-offend do so within the first year of release from custody or the commencement of a community order (Ministry of Justice, 2010b), it is not likely that this is having a significant impact on the findings of the re-offending analysis.

Higher than average re-offending rates in North Liverpool prior to the NLCJC?

A further hypothesis to explain why there might have been no significant difference between re-offending rates is that if re-offending rates in North Liverpool were dramatically higher prior to the introduction of the NLCJC, the NLCJC may have actually improved the re-offending rates in the area compared to the national average. In other words, the NLCJC may have reduced the difference in re-offending rates between North Liverpool and average rates in England and Wales post its implementation.

To test this hypothesis, a group of courts³⁷ that could have taken offenders from the North Liverpool area prior to the introduction of the NLCJC was developed with all offenders sentenced at these courts during each calendar year available for inclusion in the analysis. For each year, offenders from the available sample for the proxy area were matched to offenders in other magistrates' courts in England and Wales³⁸ according to the matching criteria described earlier in this chapter and in Annex A. Re-offending rates for the proxy North Liverpool area and the matched comparison group were calculated and are presented in Table 2.6.

It is important to highlight that this is a proxy measure that will not necessarily accurately reflect the situation specific to the NLCJC area. The findings from this analysis should

³⁷ The courts included in the proxy were: Liverpool Crown court; Liverpool magistrates' court (adult); Liverpool magistrates' court (youth); and South Sefton magistrates' court (adult) in 2000 to 2008. Offenders sentenced at the NLCJC were also included in the proxy in 2005 to 2008 (inclusive). As a range of courts in the Liverpool area constitute the proxy, the re-offending rates quoted in Table 2.6 measure a wider cohort of offenders than the discrete NLCJC re-offending rates quoted elsewhere in this report and therefore will not be the same.

³⁸ Offenders in the comparison group were excluded from the sample if they had ever been sentenced at the NLCJC.

therefore be treated as indicative of the re-offending rates in the local area compared to the national picture rather than as evidence of any possible ‘change’ in re-offending due to the implementation of the NLCJC.

Table 2.6: Comparison of re-offending rates over time for the proxy North Liverpool area and matched offenders in England and Wales

Year	Sample	Total matched	Re-offending rates			Frequency of re-offending rates	
			North Liverpool proxy area	Comparison (England and Wales)	Difference in re-offending rates*	North Liverpool proxy area (per 100 offenders)	Comparison (England and Wales) (per 100 offenders)
2000	10,927	5,060	35.0%	40.0%	5.0pp	66.7	81.1
2002	11,277	5,146	38.2%	40.1%	1.9pp	77.8	78.8
2003	11,764	5,457	36.6%	40.7%	4.1pp	72.2	81.9
2004	11,134	4,890	31.2%	38.5%	7.3pp	57.6	75.1
2005	9,578	3,886	28.4%	35.7%	7.3pp	51.9	69.7
2006	9,156	3,721	30.2%	34.1%	3.9pp	56.8	66.0
2007	10,654	4,138	33.1%	36.7%	3.6pp	62.9	71.0
2008	11,440	4,333	33.6%	36.2%	2.6pp	67.3	75.3

* ‘pp’ denotes percentage points

Table 2.6 shows that the re-offending rates for the proxy North Liverpool area sample were consistently lower than the rates for matched offenders elsewhere in England and Wales and that re-offending during these years was not improved at North Liverpool any more than across England and Wales. Therefore, the evidence does not support the hypothesis that the NLCJC may have reduced the difference in re-offending rates between offenders in North Liverpool and offenders elsewhere.

Impact on local crime rates

Separately from impacting on re-offending, it could be argued that the NLCJC could be having an effect on the wider crime rates in the area due to its preventative work or through a deterrent effect. Although this was not explored in detail, the crime rates between 2004/5 and 2009/10 in North Liverpool were examined and did fall to a greater degree over that period than across England and Wales more generally (see Table 2.7). Crime rates fell at a high rate across the whole of Liverpool over the same period, although they still fell to a greater degree in North Liverpool.

Table 2.7: Crime rates from 2004/5 to 2009/10

Area	Crime rates as a percentage of population						Change in crime rates from 2004/5 to 2009/10*
	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	
Knowsley	11.7	13.0	11.3	8.8	8.7	7.9	-3.8pp
North Liverpool	20.7	21.9	19.2	15.7	14.8	13.6	-7.2pp
Sefton	9.1	9.3	8.4	7.0	6.8	6.8	-2.4pp
South Liverpool	13.3	13.2	11.4	10.1	9.2	7.7	-5.6pp
St Helens	11.4	11.7	10.3	8.6	7.8	6.9	-4.5pp
Wirral	9.5	8.9	8.2	6.7	5.9	5.3	-4.2pp
England and Wales (Total)	10.7	10.5	10.2	9.2	8.7	8.0	-2.7pp

* 'pp' denotes percentage points

Despite these figures, it is not possible to verify whether the NLCJC was a causal factor in any reduction of crime rates in the North Liverpool area.

Chapter conclusion

In summary, when compared with other courts in England and Wales, there was no evidence that the NLCJC had a statistically significant effect on re-offending rates, nor on the frequency of re-offending. In addition, there was no evidence that the NLCJC had a positive impact on re-offending for any particular type of offender, according to age, gender, disposal or index offence. There is no evidence to explain why these results did not show a positive impact on re-offending. The evidence did, however, show that offenders receiving a court order at the NLCJC were more likely to breach the conditions of their order than offenders receiving court orders elsewhere. It could be argued that this was attributable to local policing practices; however, it is not possible to verify this.

3. Impact of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre on efficiency

3.1 Background

To test the impact of the NLCJC on efficiency of court processes, the following data have been explored:

- the use of different types of disposals;
- court processes – time from offence to conviction and number of hearings per case;
- guilty plea rates;
- effective, ineffective and cracked trial rates; and
- costs.

These are considered alongside any differences in the offence mix of cases heard at the NLCJC compared to mainstream magistrates' courts in England and Wales.

Offence mix

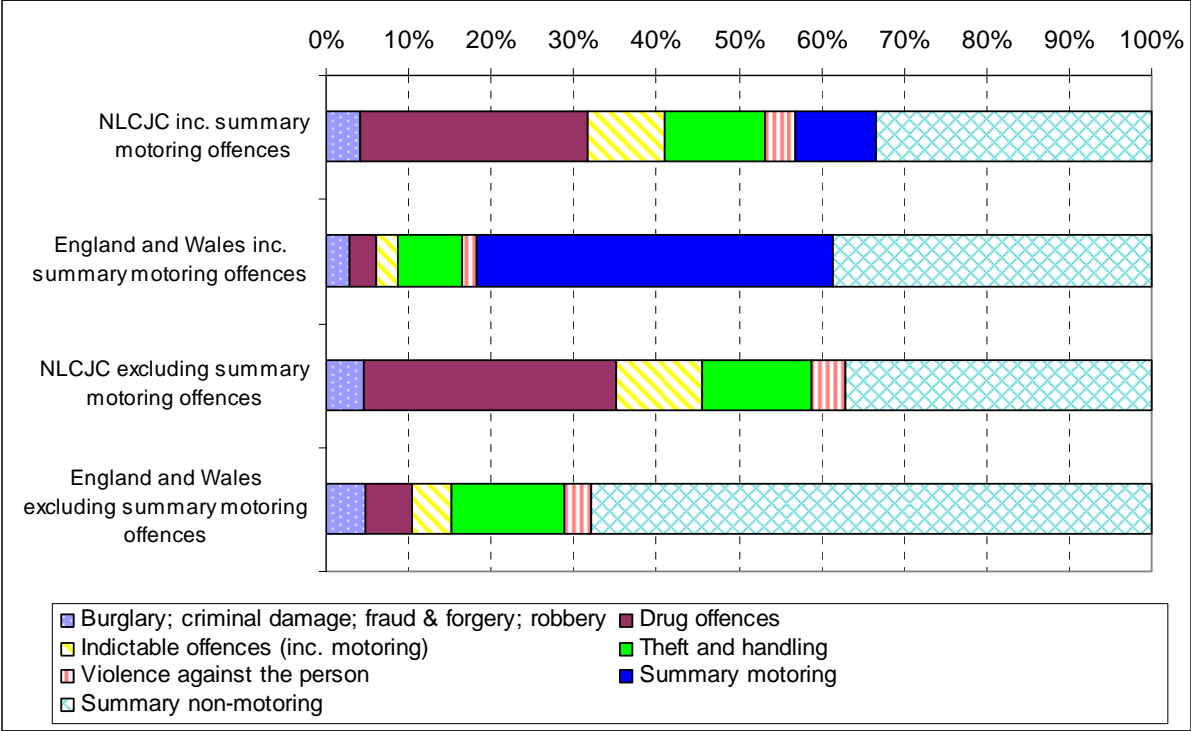
In order to consider the potential efficiencies of the NLCJC, it is first important to consider the offence mix of cases heard there in comparison with other magistrates' courts in the country.³⁹ This is because certain offence types may be more likely to result in different outcomes or processes such as more timely court proceedings. For example, offences where somebody is caught in possession of drugs may be more likely to attract a guilty plea which would therefore be completed more quickly than a more complex case where an offender pleads not guilty.

The magistrates' court caseload of the NLCJC compared to the total caseload of all magistrates' courts⁴⁰ in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined) is presented in Figure 3.1. Caseload mixes both with and without summary motoring offences are presented here as, whilst the NLCJC was not intended to hear summary road traffic offences, over 300 summary motoring offences were heard there in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined). In addition, a number of offence types have been combined for ease of presentation and sexual offences removed from the chart as they were not heard at the

³⁹ Although a small volume of Crown court cases (approximately 4% of all cases) are heard at the NLCJC, these analyses only include cases heard at the magistrates' court.

NLCJC.⁴¹ A full breakdown of the number of cases heard by offence type can be found in Annex B, Tables B.2 and B.3.

Figure 3.1: Caseload for the NLCJC and total caseload for all magistrates’ courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined)



Across England and Wales summary motoring offences make up the largest proportion of cases in magistrates’ courts, but as discussed previously, some summary motoring offences (summary road traffic offences) are not referred to NLCJC. For this reason, a more useful comparison is to exclude these types of cases. Drug offences then (after exclusion of summary motoring offences) made up 31% of all 2008, 2009 and 2010 cases, compared to 6% across England and Wales. Also deliberately excluded from the NLCJC are indictable only offences for adult offenders⁴² including sexual offences and murder.

Given the differences in the caseload of the NLCJC, direct comparison between the NLCJC and other courts in England and Wales is difficult. For this reason, comparisons between efficiencies in North Liverpool and elsewhere have been made, where possible, by

⁴⁰ Total number of cases in all magistrates’ courts in England and Wales includes those cases heard at the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre. This is to ensure consistency when presenting findings in the NLCJC compared to the average in England and Wales.

⁴¹ Sexual offences comprised 0.1% of the total cases heard in England and Wales.

⁴² Indictable only offences are heard at the NLCJC for juvenile offenders with the exception of all sexual offences and murder.

comparing results for specific offence types. However, comparing by offence type introduces an additional problem of small samples for the NLCJC. Results presented in this chapter should therefore be treated as indicative only.

3.2 Results

Use of different disposals

In order to explore how the disposals given by the NLCJC compared to other courts, a comparison of the disposal types for the NLCJC and rates for all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 were examined. In addition, a breakdown of the disposal type awarded for three offence types (drug offences; theft and handling; and summary non-motoring offences)⁴³ is presented.

Figure 3.2: Disposal types for the NLCJC and all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined)

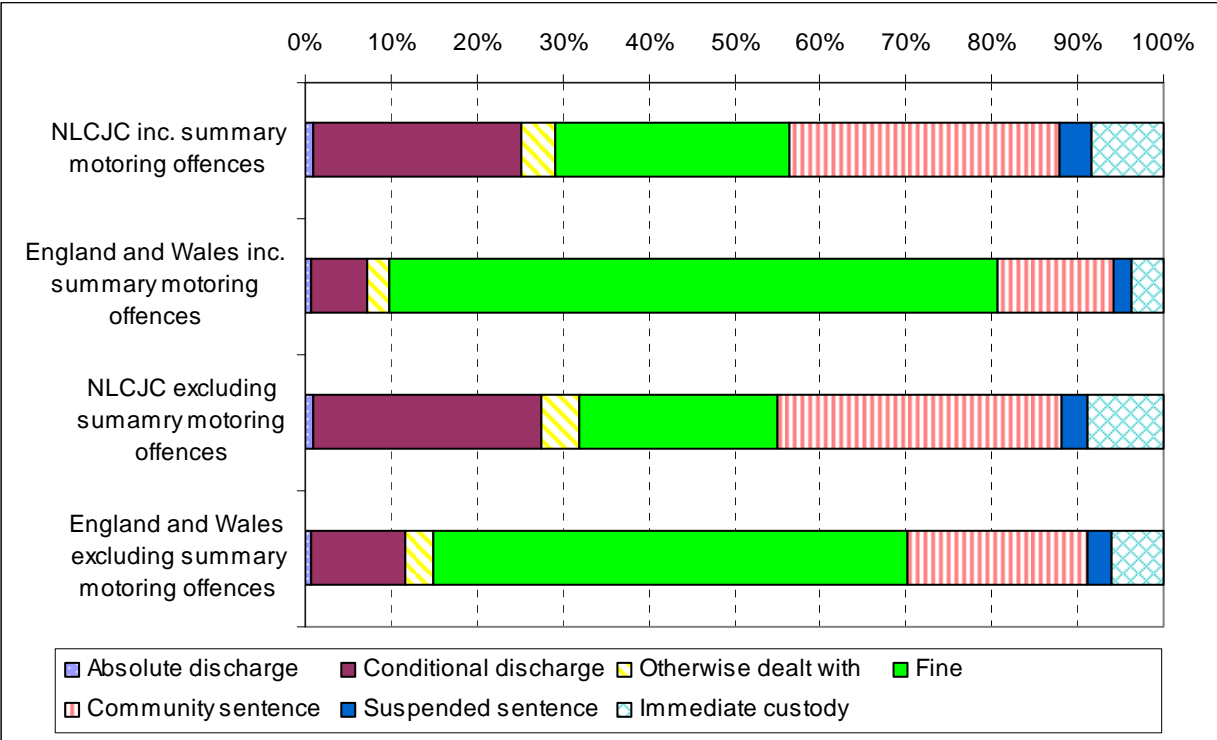


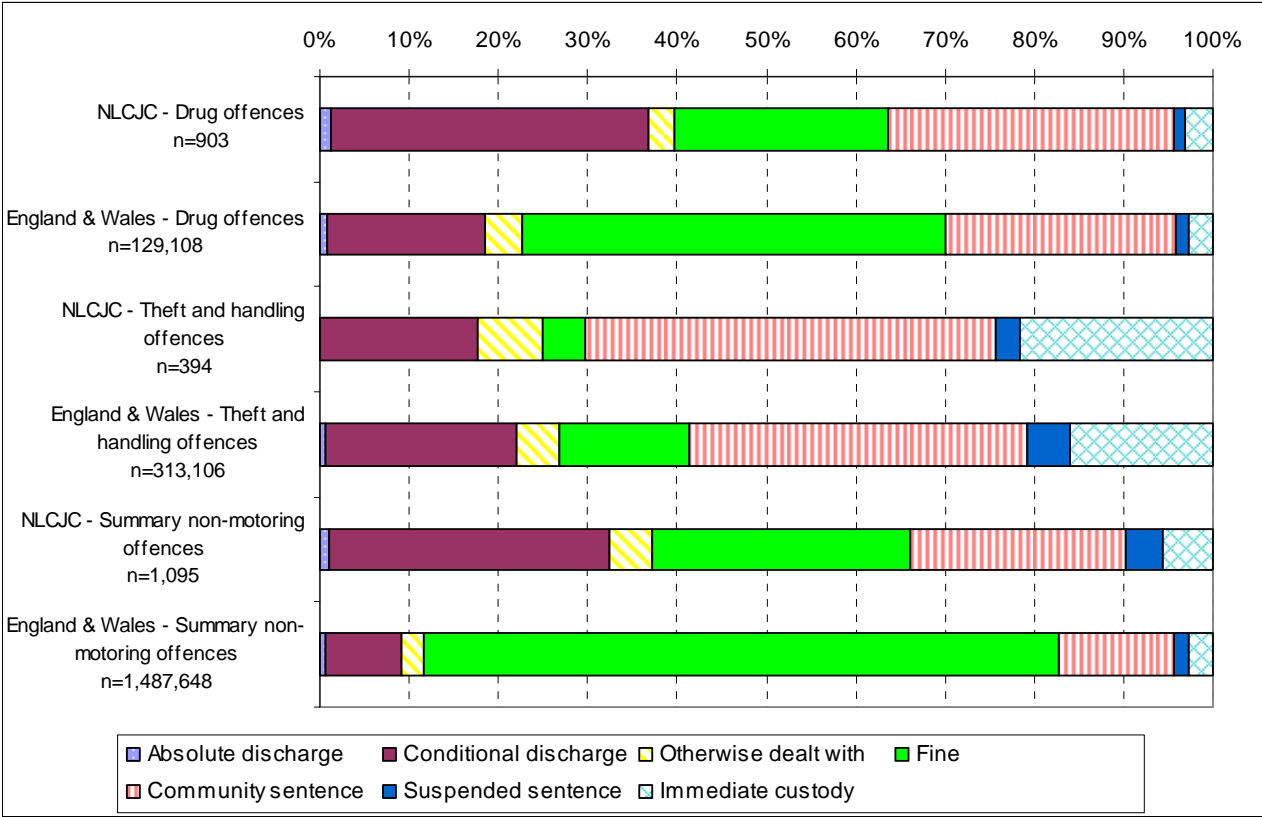
Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of disposal types awarded at the NLCJC compared to all courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined). The NLCJC awarded a higher proportion of custodial sentences over this period than other magistrates' courts in

⁴³ Drug offences; theft and handling; and summary non-motoring offences were the highest volume of offences in the NLCJC case mix.

England and Wales.⁴⁴ In addition, the NLCJC had a much lower fine rate than elsewhere in the country but gave a higher proportion of conditional discharges and slightly more community sentences than other courts. Some of these differences could be explained by the emphasis on problem-solving at the NLCJC. In addition, the difference in the use of fines could be explained by higher rates of unemployment within the North Liverpool area which could have made the judge at the NLCJC less inclined to give fines as a disposal if they were less likely to be paid.

However, possibly the strongest potential explanation for the differences in disposals given at the NLCJC is the difference of offence mix. Figure 3.3 presents the proportion of disposal types awarded for three specific offence types: drug offences, theft and handling offences and summary non-motoring offences.

Figure 3.3: Disposal types for the NLCJC and all magistrates’ courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined) by drug offences, theft and handling offences and summary non-motoring offences



⁴⁴ Analysis exploring the average length of custody also found that sentences awarded by the NLCJC were longer than the average custodial sentence awarded by other courts in England and Wales.

Even when comparing specific offence types, the NLCJC was still sentencing a higher proportion of offenders to custody, conditional discharges and community orders and fewer were being given fines (with the exception of theft and handling offences where the NLCJC awarded a lower proportion of conditional discharges than the average in England and Wales). This does suggest that the offence mix is not the key explanation in differences in disposals given at the NLCJC, although it is worth highlighting that when splitting the data by offence types, the numbers in North Liverpool are relatively small. Furthermore, there could be variation in the seriousness of the offence within the offence type which is not accounted for here. The findings from this analysis should therefore be treated as indicative only.

Similarly, when looking at the average custodial sentence length for certain offence types: the average custodial sentence length for drug offences (4 months in NLCJC compared to 2.3 months), theft and handling offences (2.8 months in NLCJC compared to 2.1 months) and summary non-motoring offences (3.4 months compared to 2.5 months) were all longer at the NLCJC than the average for all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. However, again the small numbers of cases receiving custodial sentences in the NLCJC for drugs (n=29), theft and handling (n=85) and summary non-motoring offences (n=62) are too small to form a reliable comparison and these findings should also be treated as indicative only.

Court processes

Time from offence to conviction

In order to clarify whether cases were, on average, processed more quickly than elsewhere, cases included in the re-offending analysis were used to compare the average number of days from offence to conviction (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Average number of days to conviction

	Number of offenders	Average number of days from offence to conviction
1-year re-offending (matched)		
NLCJC	814	61.0*
National (comparison)	814	73.3
1-year re-offending (non-matched)		
NLCJC	630	74.9

* Difference is not significant at the 0.05 level.

Matched cases in North Liverpool were processed at a quicker average (mean) rate than cases elsewhere (an average of 61 days compared to 73). However, this result was not statistically significant and therefore might have resulted from chance. Given that offenders had been matched on their index offence type (amongst other factors), the case mix differences at the NLCJC could not have affected the findings of this analysis.

Number of hearings per case

The HM Courts and Tribunals Service's One Performance Truth ('OPT') Trials database monitors all cases in the magistrates' court which have resulted in a trial. Table 3.2 compares the completed trials data to assess the performance of the NLCJC against all magistrates' courts in England and Wales for all offences included in the sample as well as breaking down the data into summary non-motoring offences and violence against the person offences.

Table 3.2: Average number of trial hearings per case in 2008, 2009 and 2010 – completed trial data⁴⁵ – NLCJC and England and Wales (E&W)

	2008			2009			2010		
	No. of trial cases	Average no. trial hearings per case	% cases completed in two hearings	No. of trial cases	Average no. trial hearings per case	% cases completed in two hearings	No. of trial cases	Average no. trial hearings per case	% cases completed in two hearings
NLCJC All cases	245	2.4	70.8%	225	2.2	90.4%	234	2.2	84.4%
E&W All cases	183,512	2.9	48.3%	179,856	2.8	54.0%	179,802	2.7	54.6%
NLCJC: Summary non-motoring	89	2.3	79.0%	66	2.2	89.7%	104	2.2	86.0%
E&W: Summary non-motoring	43,863	2.8	52.3%	44,999	2.7	58.0%	45,240	2.7	56.1%
NLCJC: Violence against the person	67	2.5	66.7%	60	2.2	88.9%	51	2.2	88.1%
E&W: Violence against the person	41,878	3.1	40.9%	40,038	2.9	47.0%	40,169	2.9	47.8%

⁴⁵ Source: Trials, HM Courts & Tribunals Service's One Performance Truth Database (OPT).

The data shows that, on average, the NLCJC processed trials with fewer hearings than elsewhere in the country. In 2010, the average number of hearings per case was 2.2 compared to an average of 2.7 hearings in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. In addition, a higher proportion of cases were completed in two hearings in the NLCJC compared to all courts in England and Wales (84.4% compared to 54.6%).

As the offence mix passing through the NLCJC might affect these findings, they were also broken down by offence type, where numbers were large enough to allow. Analysis of summary non-motoring offences and violence against the person offences showed that, similarly to the combined data, these cases on average took fewer hearings to complete at the NLCJC compared to other magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010. This therefore suggests that court proceedings in the NLCJC may have been more efficient than other magistrates' courts in England and Wales.

As the OPT data above only reflects numbers of hearings per case for completed trials, the performance data from the Time Interval Survey was also assessed. This survey collects information on all cases during designated periods to compare performance across courts. Data from this survey suggested that, for all cases, including those that did not result in a trial, the number of hearings per case may be higher at the NLCJC compared to other magistrates' courts in England and Wales. However, given the very small sample of cases included in this survey from the NLCJC, this finding may not be representative of the true picture and should be treated with caution.

Guilty plea rates

Findings suggest the early guilty plea rate at the NLCJC may be higher than for the rest of England and Wales. Data from the NLCJC showed that 64% of offenders dealt with pleaded guilty at the first hearing. The average figure for all magistrates' courts across England and Wales is 43%. However, there are risks with comparing these two figures, as the case mix of the NLCJC distinguishes it from other magistrates' courts, and is likely to have impacted upon the guilty plea rate.

We would expect the NLCJC, due to the mix of cases it deals with, to have a higher guilty plea rate than other magistrates' courts in England and Wales. For example, the NLCJC hears a much higher proportion of drug offences cases than other magistrates' courts; it is possible that this could be having an impact on their guilty plea rates. Time Interval Survey data shows the variation in guilty plea rates between certain offence types. For example, in

2009 the early guilty plea rate for drug offences was 65%, for violence against the person offences was 32% and for theft and handling offences was 63%.

Effective, ineffective and cracked trial rates

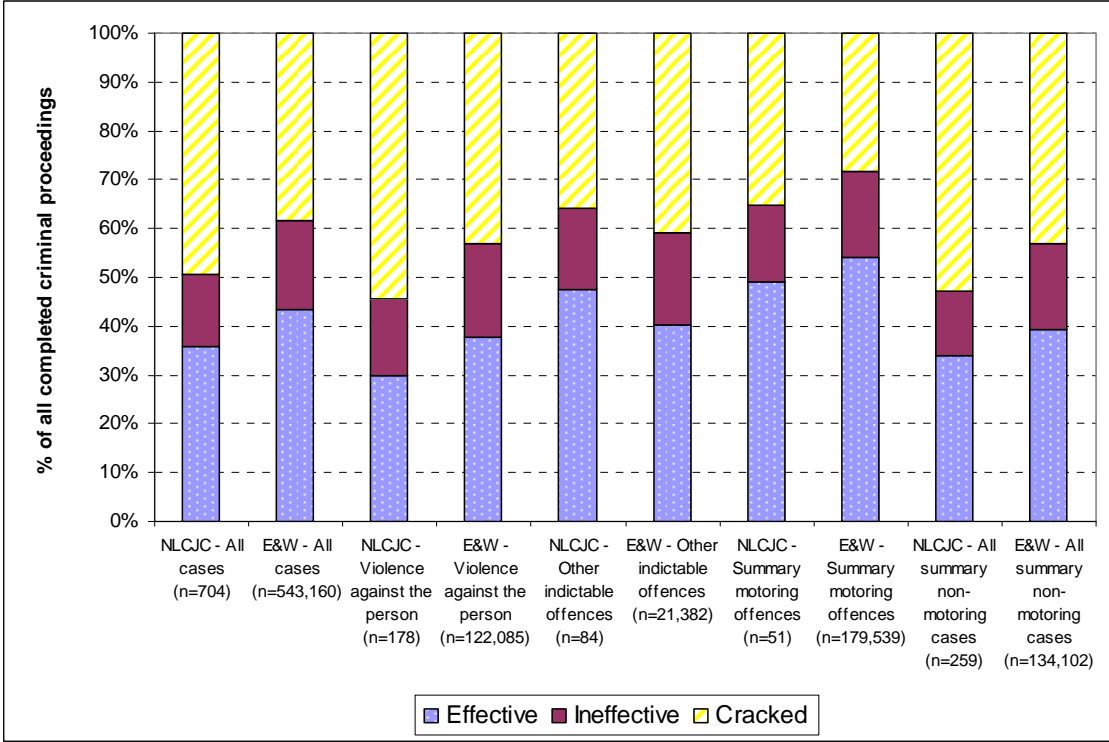
In Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service performance data, one other measure of efficiency of a magistrates' court is the number and proportion of effective trials compared to the number and proportion of ineffective and cracked trials. These are defined as follows (Ministry of Justice, 2010c):

- **Effective trials:** A trial that commences on the day it is scheduled and has an outcome in that a verdict is reached or the case is concluded.
- **Cracked trials:** On the trial date no further trial time is required and the case is closed. This may be because the defendant offers acceptable pleas or the prosecution offers no evidence.
- **Ineffective trials:** On the trial date, the trial does not go ahead due to action or inaction by one or more of the prosecution, the defence or the court and a further listing for trial is required.

To assess trial rates, the number and proportion of trials that were effective, ineffective and cracked at the NLCJC in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined) were compared to average rates for all magistrates' courts in England and Wales for the same period.

Figure 3.4 shows the proportion of all trials that were effective, cracked and ineffective at the NLCJC and all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. In addition, the trials have been broken down by offence type in order to account for the difference in offence mix at the NLCJC – Figure 3.4 shows all offences where there were 50 or more trials at the NLCJC (a full breakdown is provided in Annex B, Table B.5). Over all trials in 2008, 2009 and 2010 combined, the NLCJC had a lower proportion of effective trials (35.8% at the NLCJC compared to 43.4% in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales), a lower proportion of ineffective trials (14.9% at the NLCJC compared to 18.3%) and a higher proportion of cracked trials (49.3% at the NLCJC compared to 38.3%). This finding was consistent across all offence types with the exception of 'other indictable offences' where the NLCJC had a higher proportion of effective trials and a lower proportion of cracked trials.

Figure 3.4: The proportion of effective, cracked and ineffective trials at the NLCJC and all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 combined



This therefore suggests that court processes at the NLCJC were less efficient in terms of the proportion of effective trials compared to average rates for all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. In particular, the higher rate of cracked trials at the NLCJC suggests that resources and time may be being wasted in preparing cases that are subsequently closed on the day of trial.

The reasons for a trial being classified as ineffective or cracked are recorded in each case (a full breakdown of the reasons provided is presented in Table B.5, Annex B). The majority of cracked cases at the NLCJC were classed as such due to a late guilty plea being entered for the first time by the defence; the percentage for the NLCJC was 25.6% compared to 20.6% in England and Wales. The second most common reason for a cracked trial at the NLCJC was where the prosecution ended the case due to a witness being absent or withdrawing from giving evidence at trial (9.2% of all trials at the NLCJC compared to 4.8% in England and Wales). It is possible that wider area issues (for example, witness attendance more generally in the Liverpool area) could be having an impact on these results. Another factor which could also have affected these findings is the prevalence of domestic violence cases heard at the NLCJC, as it is possible that witnesses are more likely to be absent or withdraw from giving evidence in these cases.

4. Conclusions

There is no evidence that the NLCJC is any more effective in reducing re-offending than other courts. A number of explanations have been offered for why there is no evidence of a positive impact on re-offending, including: different reporting behaviour, different policing behaviour, quicker processes etc. We found no clear evidence that any of these factors were likely to have had an impact on the re-offending rates in this evaluation.

However, the evidence did show that offenders receiving a court order at the NLCJC were more likely to breach the conditions of their order than offenders receiving court orders elsewhere. It could be argued that this was attributable to offenders going through the NLCJC being subjected to greater police scrutiny than elsewhere and, therefore, being more likely to be apprehended if breaching the conditions of their order. However, it is not possible to verify this.

There is also no evidence to suggest that offending behaviour generally has improved more in the North Liverpool area than elsewhere. Over the period that the court has been in place, re-offending rates have fallen slightly, but have risen again more recently, very much in line with the rest of England and Wales. Crime rates did fall in North Liverpool more generally to a larger degree than across England and Wales and other areas of Liverpool. However, it is not possible to verify whether the NLCJC was having a specific impact.

There was some evidence that the NLCJC operated more efficiently than other courts. Cases were dealt with more quickly, with indications of less elapsed time from offence to conviction and fewer hearings per case going to trial compared to the national average. However, there was also evidence of inefficiency at the court – there were a higher proportion of cracked trials at the NLCJC compared to national figures.

Although findings indicate that the guilty plea rate at the NLCJC may be higher than for the rest of England and Wales, a number of factors distinguishing the NLCJC from other magistrates' courts, such as case mix, mean that we would expect the NLCJC to have a higher guilty plea rate than other magistrates' courts. These differences therefore mean that a national comparison is not a meaningful one.

There are a number of additional outcomes that underpin Community Justice. These include: courts connecting to the community; justice being seen to be done; having a strong independent judiciary; and raising confidence within the community. These outcomes were not explored in this evaluation.

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Annex A

Matching process

The North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (NLCJC) provided details of all offenders sentenced at the NLCJC between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2009. The details of these offenders were then subjected to a robust data cleansing and matching process, described below. At the start of the matching process there were 1,472,530 offenders from the comparison courts in England and Wales and 2,351 offenders in the NLCJC group available to be included in the analysis.

Using the Police National Computer (PNC) database to verify data, offenders from the NLCJC sample were excluded if they failed to fulfil certain criteria necessary to ensure a robust match with offenders in the comparison group. These criteria were:

- if their conviction date was before 1 January 2007 or on or after 1 January 2010;
- if they had received a caution rather than a conviction for an offence;
- if they had been sentenced at the NLCJC more than once during the period, the earliest offence matched to the PNC was included as the index offence in the analysis (and the subsequent offences were counted as re-offences);
- if they were not included in the 2007, 2008 or 2009 cohorts of the PNC.⁴⁶ This was to ensure that all offenders in the NLCJC sample also satisfied the exclusion criteria using the PNC data.

Table A.1 presents the number of offenders included and excluded at each stage of the matching and data cleansing process of the re-offending analysis described above.

Table A.1: Number of offenders excluded from the analysis at each stage

Matching process	Offenders included	Offenders excluded
NLCJC cases matched to PNC	2,351	–
Conviction date between 01/01/07 and 31/12/09	2,345	6
Duplicates removed (first contact with NLCJC selected)	1,811	534
Offenders found in the 2007 to 2009 full year cohorts	1,703	108
Matches found to similar offenders in England and Wales	814	889

⁴⁶ The re-offending cohorts are used in the annual National Statistics re-offending publications produced by the Ministry of Justice.

As a result of the matching process, 1,703 offenders in the NLCJC sample fulfilled the criteria necessary for a robust match to the comparison group. These 1,703 offenders were then subjected to the standard Ministry of Justice matching process used in re-offending publications (and described in the main body of the report). To be included in the final matched sample, offenders in the NLCJC had to be matched to offenders in the comparison group according to *all* of the following criteria:

- Exact match on offender's age at the index date;⁴⁷
- Exact match on the total number of previous convictions;
- Exact match on the Home Office offence code⁴⁸ for the index offence;
- Exact match on index disposal;
- Exact match on gender;
- Exact match on ethnicity; and
- Conviction date for the index offence differs at most by 90 days for offenders receiving a non-custodial sentence or prison release date differs at most by 90 days for offenders receiving a custodial sentence.

814 offenders in the NLCJC group were matched to offenders in the comparison group according to these criteria. This represents 48% of the available sample in the NLCJC.

The extent to which the matched groups were representative of the total offender population (of the NLCJC and comparison groups) can be explored by comparing the re-offending rates for the matched and non-matched groups. While we can be confident in the robustness of the matching given the strict matching criteria applied to the analysis, it should be noted that the higher re-offending rates in the non-matched group were attributable to the non-matched group containing more prolific offenders than the matched group.

For example, there were differences observed in terms of the number of previous offences for the matched and non-matched groups of the NLCJC: the matched NLCJC group had an average of 10.1 previous offences compared to an average of 33.8 for the non-matched group. These differences can be explained by the inclusion of a number of highly prolific

⁴⁷ The index date is the date of the court conviction for offenders receiving a non-custodial sentence or the date of the prison release date for offenders receiving a custodial sentence.

⁴⁸ There are around 3,000 offence codes on the Police National Computer to reflect possible offences committed.

offenders in the unmatched group⁴⁹ which has skewed the average number of previous offences for this group.

Given that offenders were matched on the exact number of previous convictions (as well as other factors), the more previous offences an offender had, the harder they were to match exactly to another offender. Furthermore, given that a high number of previous convictions is associated with an increased propensity to re-offend, this could also explain the higher overall re-offending rate for the unmatched group (41.3% in the matched group compared to 46.5% in the unmatched group).

⁴⁹ The 814 matched NLCJC offenders have up to 157 previous offences. However, the 630 non-matched NLCJC offenders include 15 people who have previous offences ranging from 159 to 298 previous offences. It is these 15 people who have had a big impact upon the average number of previous offences.

Annex B Additional tables

Table B.1: Re-offending rates by index offence

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended	Re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences	Number of re-offenders (breaches only)	Breach rate	Average age at index offence
Index disposal NLCJC (matched offenders)							
Violence (serious and non-serious)	130	38	29.2%	0.96	36	27.7%	25.9
Robbery	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Public order	119	56	47.1%	1.55	28	23.5%	26.3
Drink driving	140	18	12.9%	0.36	*	*	35.3
Possessing/supplying drugs	183	107	58.5%	1.77	50	27.3%	22
Theft	61	39	63.9%	2.25	21	34.4%	28.6
Absconding or bail offences	31	15	48.4%	2.23	16	51.6%	24.3
Motoring offences	55	21	38.2%	1.22	13	23.6%	24.6
Criminal damage	43	17	39.5%	1.35	*	*	23
Handling	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fraud/forgery	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Theft of a vehicle	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Theft of possessions in a vehicle	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Import/export/production of drugs	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burglary (domestic)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burglary (other)	14	*	*	*	*	*	21.4
Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Index offence comparison (matched offenders)							
Violence (serious and non-serious)	130	45	34.6%	0.85	22	16.9%	25.9
Robbery	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Public order	119	54	45.4%	1.61	*	*	26.3
Drink driving	140	25	17.9%	0.43	*	*	35.3
Possessing/supplying drugs	183	82	44.8%	1.32	37	20.2%	22
Theft	61	31	50.8%	2.25	16	26.2%	28.6
Absconding or bail offences	31	11	35.5%	2.35	12	38.7%	24.3
Motoring offences	55	21	38.2%	1.31	*	*	24.6
Criminal damage	43	14	32.6%	1.12	*	*	23
Handling	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fraud/forgery	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Theft of a vehicle	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Theft of possessions in a vehicle	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Import/export/production of drugs	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

	Number of offenders	Number of offenders who re-offended	Re-offending rate	Average number of re-offences	Number of re-offenders (breaches only)	Breach rate	Average age at index offence
Burglary (domestic)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burglary (other)	14	*	*	*	*	*	21.4
Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Index offence NLCJC – (non-matched offenders)							
Violence (serious and non-serious)	94	36	38.3%	1.28	24	25.5%	33
Public order	76	26	34.2%	1.74	19	25%	34.5
Drink driving	24	*	*	*	*	*	37.5
Possessing/supplying drugs	135	73	54.1%	1.53	41	30.4%	30.6
Theft	92	58	63%	3.54	43	46.7%	37.7
Motoring offences	52	22	42.3%	1.21	12	23.1%	32.5
Criminal damage	22	*	*	*	*	*	38.8
Handling	15	*	*	*	*	*	29.1
Fraud/forgery	19	*	*	*	*	*	29.9
Theft of a vehicle	12	*	*	*	*	*	31.2
Theft of possessions in a vehicle	15	*	*	*	*	*	28.2
Import/export/production of drugs	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burglary (domestic)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burglary (other)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Soliciting/prostitution	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	33	18	54.5%	1.82	*	*	28.5

* Figures removed where there were ten or fewer offenders as low numbers make the data unreliable for interpretation.

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

Table B.2: Conviction ratios by offence for NLCJC and England and Wales in 2010

	Proceeded against	Convicted	Conviction ratio ⁽¹⁾	Committed to the Crown court for trial ⁽²⁾
NLCJC – All offences	1,670	1,315	78.7%	127
England and Wales – All offences	1,544,521	1,282,018	83.0%	106,872
NLCJC – Violence against the person	72	58	80.6%	36
NLCJC – Sexual offences	*	*	*	*
NLCJC – Burglary	30	23	76.7%	11
NLCJC – Robbery	*	*	*	*
NLCJC – Theft and handling stolen goods	151	139	92.1%	*
NLCJC – Fraud and forgery	22	18	81.8%	*
NLCJC – Criminal damage	*	*	*	*
NLCJC – Drug offences	481	406	84.4%	33
NLCJC – Other (excl. motoring offences)	226	151	66.8%	27
NLCJC – Indictable motoring offences	*	*	*	*
NLCJC – Summary non-motoring offences	576	419	72.7%	*
NLCJC – Summary motoring offences	96	88	91.7%	*
E&W – Violence against the person	37,332	25,834	69.2%	29,204
E&W – Sexual offences	2,594	1,644	63.4%	7,970

	Proceeded against	Convicted	Conviction ratio ⁽¹⁾	Committed to the Crown court for trial ⁽²⁾
E&W – Burglary	20,222	15,903	78.6%	11,548
E&W – Robbery	4,219	2,855	67.7%	9,483
E&W – Theft and handling stolen goods	126,623	113,849	89.9%	8,944
E&W – Fraud and forgery	17,688	14,402	81.4%	8,362
E&W – Criminal damage	8,190	6,249	76.3%	1,760
E&W – Drug offences	53,235	49,089	92.2%	14,023
E&W – Other (excl. motoring offences)	58,452	38,823	66.4%	13,271
E&W – Indictable motoring offences	2,073	1,722	83.1%	1,708
E&W – Summary non-motoring offences	605,941	488,816	80.7%	539
E&W – Summary motoring offences	607,952	522,832	86.0%	60

* Figures removed where there were ten or fewer offenders as low numbers make the data unreliable for interpretation.

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

¹ The conviction ratio in this table is based on defendants proceeded against and convicted in magistrates' courts only.

² Committed for trial cases are cases which can be heard in either a magistrates' court or the Crown court. A defendant can elect to be tried in the Crown court or a magistrate can decide that a case is sufficiently serious that it should be dealt with in the Crown court.

Table B.3: Caseload mix in NLCJC and all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined) including summary motoring offences

	Number of cases in NLCJC incl. summary motoring	Proportion of NLCJC caseload	Number of cases in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales incl. summary motoring	Proportion of England and Wales caseload
Burglary	54	1.7%	39,806	1.0%
Criminal damage	31	0.9%	19,956	0.5%
Drug offences	903	27.6%	128,205	3.3%
Fraud and forgery	41	1.3%	38,835	1.0%
Indictable motoring	8	0.2%	4,258	0.1%
Other indictable (excl. motoring)	300	9.2%	97,715	2.5%
Robbery	6	0.2%	8,541	0.2%
Sexual offences	0	0.0%	3,646	0.1%
Theft and handling	394	12.0%	312,712	8.1%
Violence against the person	119	3.6%	68,323	1.8%
Summary motoring	319	9.8%	1,637,127	42.6%
Summary non-motoring	1,095	33.5%	1,486,553	38.7%
Total	3,270	100.0%	3,845,677	100.0%

Table B.4: Caseload mix in NLCJC and all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (combined) excluding summary motoring offences

	Number of cases in NLCJC excl. summary motoring	Proportion of NLCJC caseload	Number of cases in all magistrates' courts in England and Wales excl. summary motoring	Proportion of England and Wales caseload
Burglary	54	1.8%	39,806	1.8%
Criminal damage	31	1.1%	19,956	0.9%
Drug offences	903	30.6%	128,205	5.8%
Fraud and forgery	41	1.4%	38,835	1.8%
Indictable motoring	8	0.3%	4,258	0.2%
Other indictable (excl. motoring)	300	10.2%	97,715	4.4%
Robbery	6	0.2%	8,541	0.4%
Sexual offences	0	0.0%	3,646	0.2%
Theft and handling	394	13.4%	312,712	14.2%
Violence against the person	119	4.0%	68,323	3.1%
Summary non-motoring	1,095	37.1%	1,486,553	67.3%
Total	2,951	100.0%	2,208,550	100.0%

Table B.5: Numbers and proportions of cracked and ineffective trials by reasons

	NLCJC		England & Wales	
	Total	% of all trials	Total	% of all trials
Total trials:	704		543,161	
Effective trials total:	252	35.8%	235,862	43.4%
<i>Cracked trials</i>				
A – Acceptable guilty plea(s) entered late, offered for the first time by the defence	180	25.6%	111,638	20.6%
B – Acceptable guilty plea(s) entered late, previously rejected by the prosecution	*	*	4,739	0.9%
C – Acceptable guilty plea(s) to alternative new charge, first time offered by defence	22	3.1%	13,599	2.5%
D – Acceptable guilty plea(s) to alternative new charge, previously rejected by the prosecution	*	*	2,127	0.4%
E – Defendant bound over, acceptable to prosecution, offered for the first time by the defence	22	3.1%	3,864	0.7%
F – Defendant bound over, now acceptable to prosecution – previously rejected by the prosecution	*	*	829	0.2%
G – Unable to proceed with trial because defendant incapable through alcohol/drugs	0	0.0%	38	0.0%
H – Defendant deceased	0	0.0%	79	0.0%
I – Prosecution end case: insufficient evidence	38	5.4%	30,386	5.6%
J – Prosecution end case: witness absent/withdrawn	65	9.2%	26,269	4.8%
K – Prosecution end case: public interest grounds	*	*	9,669	1.8%
L – Prosecution end case: adjournment refused	*	*	4,655	0.9%
Cracked trials total:	347	49.3%	207,892	38.3%
<i>Ineffective trials</i>				
M1 – Prosecution not ready: served late notice of additional evidence on defence	0	0.0%	2,168	0.4%
M2 – Prosecution not ready: specify in comments	*	*	6,730	1.2%
M3 – Prosecution failed to disclose unused evidence	*	*	1,737	0.3%
N1 – Prosecution witness absent: police	*	*	3,920	0.7%
N2 – Prosecution witness absent: professional/expert	0	0.0%	555	0.1%

	NLCJC		England & Wales	
	Total	% of all trials	Total	% of all trials
N3 – Prosecution witness absent: other	16	2.3%	14,108	2.6%
O1 – Prosecution advocate engaged in another trial	0	0.0%	199	0.0%
O2 – Prosecution advocate failed to attend	*	*	710	0.1%
P – Prosecution increased time estimate – insufficient time for trial to start	*	*	694	0.1%
Q1 – Defence not ready: disclosure problems	*	*	4,017	0.7%
Q2 – Defence not ready: specify in comments (incl. no instructions)	10	1.4%	11,363	2.1%
Q3 – Defence asked for additional prosecution witness to attend	*	*	1,104	0.2%
R – Defence witness absent	*	*	3,894	0.7%
S1 – Defendant absent – did not proceed in absence (judicial discretion)	12	1.7%	9,965	1.8%
S2 – Defendant ill or otherwise unfit to proceed	*	*	7,164	1.3%
S3 – Defendant not produced by Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS)	*	*	2,080	0.4%
S4 – Defendant absent – unable to proceed as defendant not notified of place and time of hearing	0	0.0%	1,203	0.2%
T – Defence increased time estimate, insufficient time for trial to start	*	*	1,034	0.2%
U1 – Defence advocate engaged in other trial	0	0.0%	206	0.0%
U2 – Defence advocate failed to attend	*	*	1,145	0.2%
V – Defendant dismissed advocate	*	*	381	0.1%
W1 – Another case over-ran	*	*	5,916	1.1%
W2 – Judge/magistrate availability	*	*	824	0.2%
W3 – Overlisting ⁽¹⁾	10	1.4%	15,629	2.9%
W4 – Equipment/accommodation failure	*	*	1,593	0.3%
W5 – No interpreter available	0	0.0%	1,068	0.2%
Ineffective trials total:	105	14.9%	99,407	18.3%

* Figures removed where there were ten or fewer offenders as low numbers make the data unreliable for interpretation.

Italics designate values of fewer than 50 offenders, meaning that data should be treated with caution.

⁽¹⁾ This relates to cases listed for trial that do not take place on the day. On occasion, cases are listed as reserve cases for trial in the event that other listed trials are not effective. This category includes those reserve cases that could not be heard as all other trial cases were effective, or where part-heard cases overran and, therefore, listed trials did not take place.

Annex C

Sanction detection rates

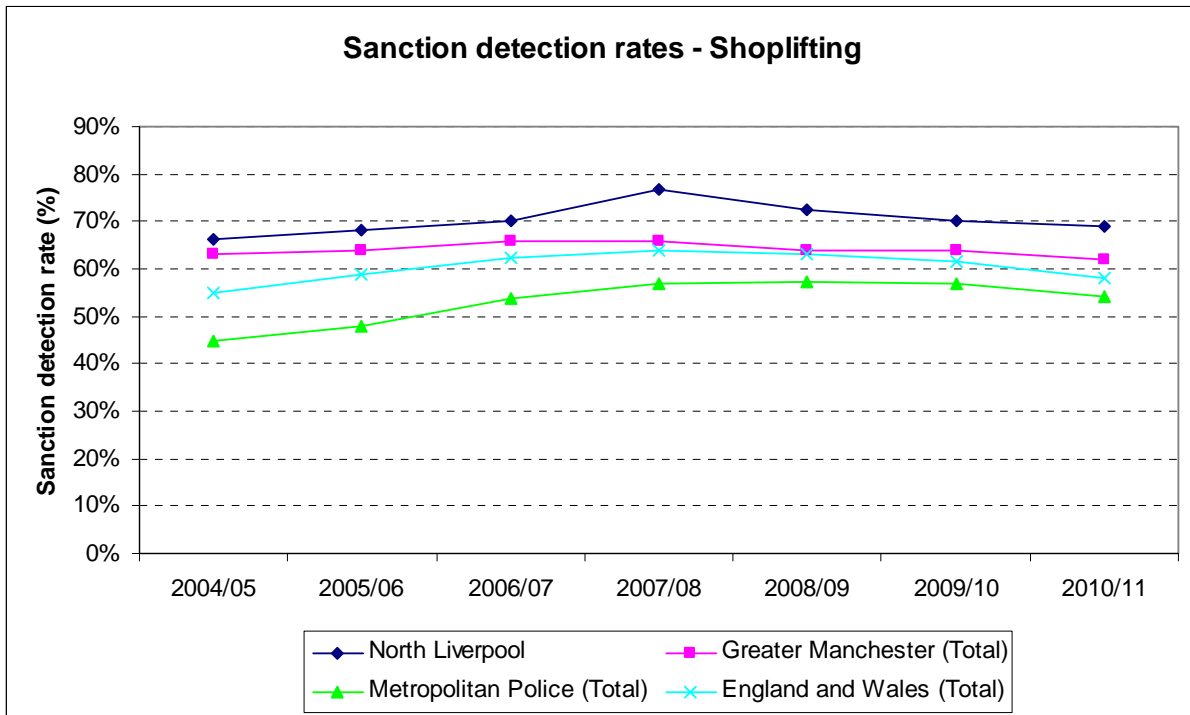
Using Home Office recorded crime data, figures for North Liverpool were compared to similar metropolitan regions in England (Greater Manchester and the Metropolitan Police) as well as to the average rates for England and Wales. Comparisons were made over time from 2004/05 (prior to when the NLCJC was established in September 2005) to the latest available year (2010/11).

Data at Basic Command Unit (BCU) level were used to compare crime rates in North Liverpool to other regions as this was the lowest level of data available from the Crime in England and Wales dataset. The wards included in the Liverpool North borough were: Everton; Anfield; County; Kirkdale; Old Swan; West Derby; Yew Tree; Knotty Ash; Kensington and Fairfield; Tuebrook; Croxteth; Norris Green; Clubmoor; Warbrek; and Fazakerley. Although the NLCJC only includes the wards of Everton, Anfield, County and Kirkdale (approximately one quarter of the population of Liverpool North) and given that it would have been difficult to break down the crime rates and sanction detection rates to this level, it was thought that the comparison at BCU level should provide a useful indication of variation in crime rates over time for the area. However, it should be noted that there may be some variation in crime rates and sanction detection rates for the wards dealt with specifically by the NLCJC and that these figures should be used only as an indication of the crime rates and sanction detection rates for the wards dealt with by the NLCJC.

Shoplifting offences

Sanction detection rates for shoplifting have broadly remained constant or have shown a slight increase over time across all comparison areas (Figure C.1). Sanction detection rates for North Liverpool remain higher compared to Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and England and Wales across all years.

Figure C.1: Sanction detection rates for shoplifting offences: Comparison of rates in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and England and Wales in 2004/05 to 2010/11



This therefore suggests that where police in North Liverpool were given more discretion, they may have been more inclined to give a formal sanction for the shoplifting offence than elsewhere.

However, as it is not specified what formal sanction was awarded, it could be that those in North Liverpool were more likely to receive an out of court disposal for the offence than a formal charge. As out of court disposals are not included as a re-offence in the analysis, if offenders in North Liverpool did tend to receive out of court disposals rather than formal charges (which then resulted in a court conviction), their higher sanction detection rates would not have an impact on the re-offending analysis of the NLCJC.

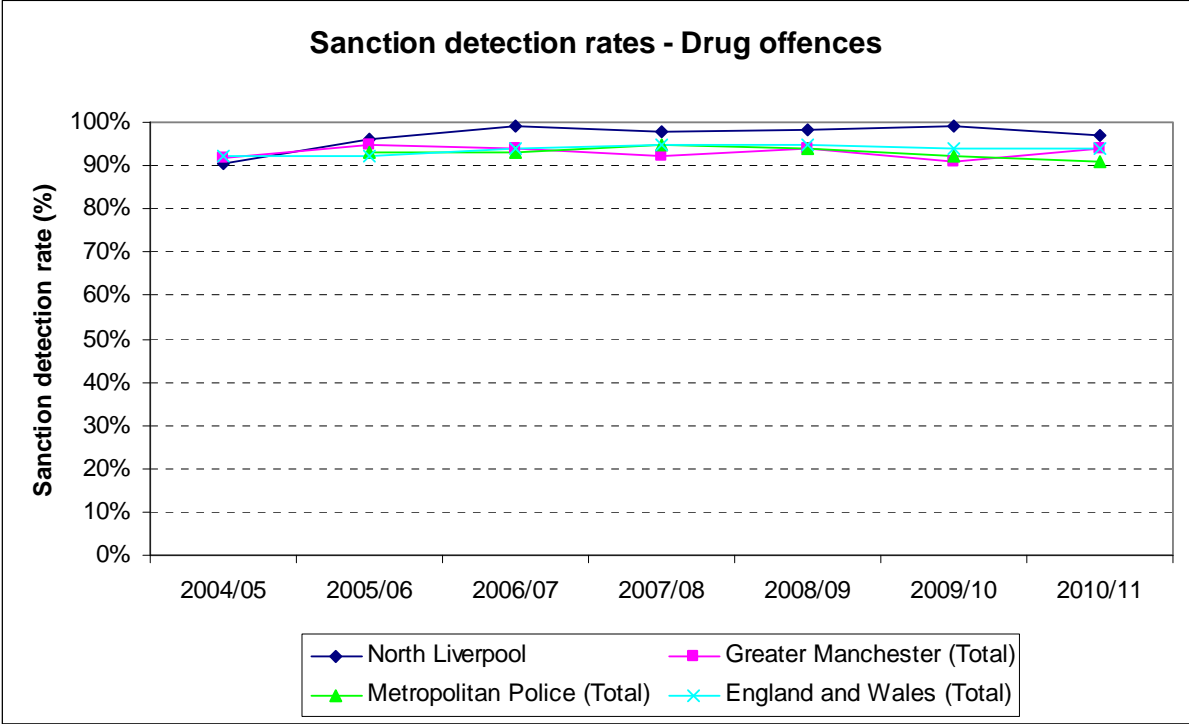
Drug offences

Figure C.2 shows the sanction detection rates for drug offences in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and the average rates for England and Wales. Metropolitan Police figures for sanction detections for drug offences are not available for 2004/05 and are therefore excluded from Figure C.2. Sanction detection rates were lowest in North Liverpool (90%) in 2004/05 compared to rates in England and Wales and Greater Manchester (both 92%). However, sanction detection rates in North Liverpool increased at a higher rate to the other comparison areas in 2005/06 (96% in North Liverpool compared to

95% in Greater Manchester, 93% in the Metropolitan Police area and 92% in England and Wales) and remained the higher rate of the four comparison areas for the subsequent five years.

It should be noted that the increase in sanction detection rates in North Liverpool between 2004/05 and 2005/06 may be attributable to the police powers to issue cannabis warnings which were introduced in 2004/05 but which took time to bed in across forces.

Figure C.2: Sanction detection rates for drug offences: Comparison of rates in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and England and Wales in 2004/05 to 2010/11



As sanction detection rates were higher in North Liverpool and, at times, have continued to increase during periods where rates in other areas have decreased (for example, between 2008/09 and 2009/10 rates in Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and the average for England and Wales have seen a decrease in rates), this suggests that people in North Liverpool may be more likely to receive a formal sanction for drug offences than they would be for the same offence in other parts of the country. If these formal sanctions resulted in court convictions (i.e. post-charge/summons) rather than out of court disposals, this could have implications for the re-offending analysis of the NLCJC (as the re-offending analysis only includes court convictions).

In order to test this, the sanction detection rates for drug offences were broken down to look at the types of sanction. As with the previous analyses, comparisons were made of the sanction rates as a proportion of the total number of offences recorded for that area in that year. Rates for giving a formal charge (which could have been included as a re-offence in the re-offending analysis if the offender charged with the offence was convicted of it in court) were compared to rates for out of court disposal (which would not have been included as a re-offence in the re-offending analysis) and comparisons were again made between rates in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and the average rates for England and Wales over time.

Figure C.3 displays the proportion of offences that received a formal charge or summons for a drugs possession or small-scale supply offences. Rates in North Liverpool were below those in Greater Manchester over all years and average rates in England and Wales (with the exception of 2009/10 and 2010/11).⁵⁰ Although charge/summons rates were higher in North Liverpool than in the Metropolitan Police area from 2007/08 to 2009/10, it appears that offenders in North Liverpool were generally less likely or as likely to receive a formal charge for drug offences than elsewhere. This would therefore suggest that offenders tended to receive an out of court disposal for drug offences in North Liverpool rather than a formal charge or summons. As it is only formal charges/summons (not out of court disposals) that can result in court convictions, it is therefore unlikely that the higher sanction detection rates are having an impact on the re-offending rates in the NLCJC.

⁵⁰ The decrease in charge/summons rates for North Liverpool between 2004/05 and 2005/06 is likely to be due to the introduction of cannabis warnings which were introduced in 2004/05 but took some time to bed in across forces.

Figure C.3: Charge/summons rates for drug offences: Comparison of rates in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and England and Wales in 2004/05 to 2010/11

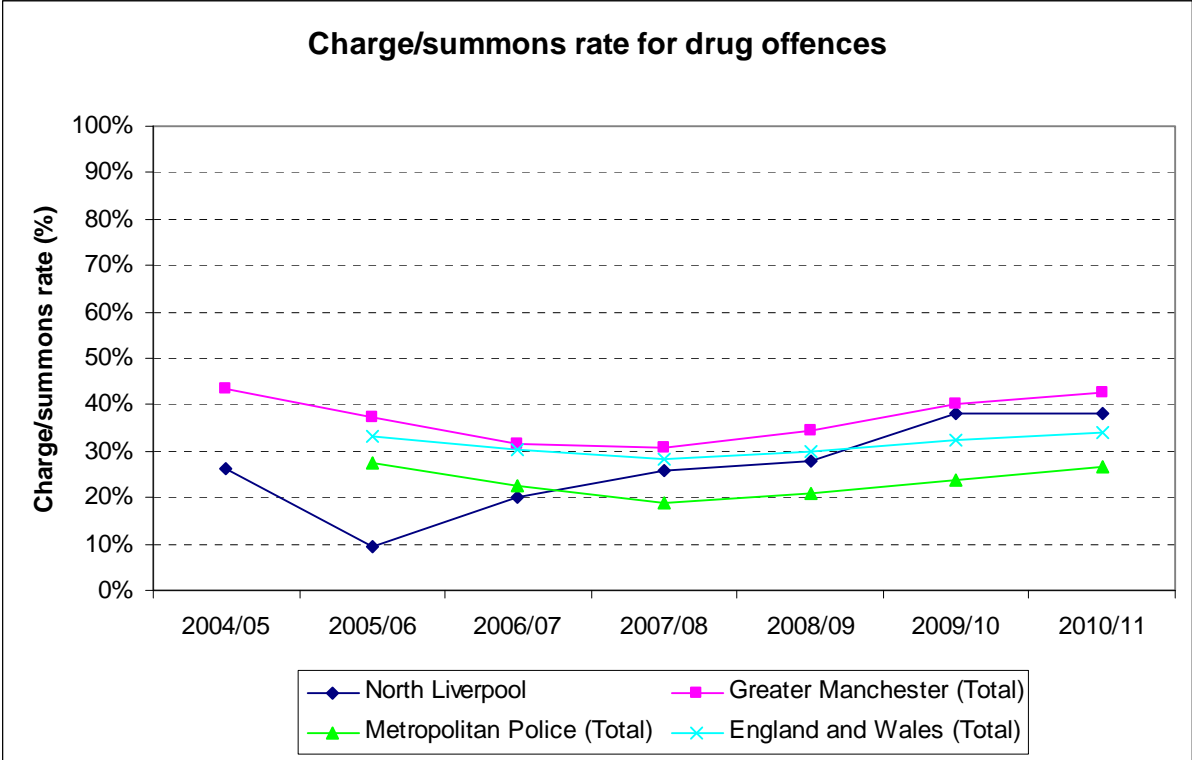
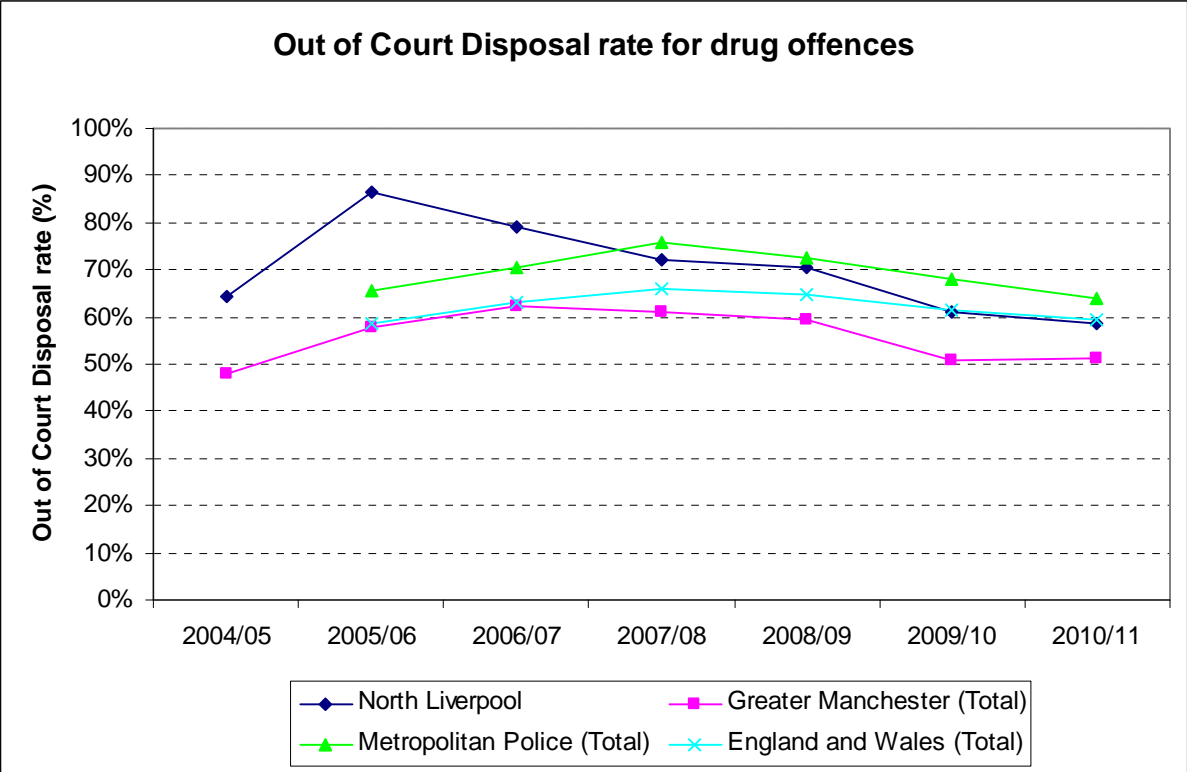


Figure C.4 displays the proportion of offences that received an out of court disposal (caution; penalty notice for disorder; or cannabis warning).⁵¹ While the rate for charges/summons has generally increased over time, as would be expected, the comparable rate for out of court disposals for the offence has generally decreased over time. Rates in North Liverpool have generally been higher than England and Wales and Greater Manchester (with the exception of 2009/10 and 2010/11 when rates were lower than England and Wales but remained higher than Greater Manchester).

⁵¹ Offences taken into consideration at court were excluded from the out of court disposals.

Figure C.4: Out of court disposal rates for drug offences: Comparison of rates in North Liverpool, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police area and England and Wales in 2004/05 to 2010/11



This therefore suggests that offenders in North Liverpool were, on average, more likely to receive an out of court disposal for a drug offence than be charged or receive a summons for the offence. It is therefore unlikely that the difference in sanction detection rates for drug offences is having an impact on the reconviction rates in the NLCJC.

Ministry of Justice Research Series 10/12

**North Liverpool Community Justice Centre:
Analysis of re-offending rates and efficiency of court processes**

Based on Community Justice principles, the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (NLCJC) brings together a range of criminal justice agencies as a one-stop-shop for tackling offending in the local area. Adding to the findings from previous evaluations of the NLCJC, this evaluation assessed the impact the court had on re-offending and the efficiency of court processes. Though the NLCJC had no impact on re-offending rates, breach rates among offenders receiving court orders there were higher than elsewhere. The efficiency findings were mixed, providing evidence of both positive and negative performance at the court.

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