

Alcohol Brief Interventions (ABIs) in the Scottish Criminal Justice Setting: A Pilot Project

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Background



- **Strong links between alcohol and crime**, violent crime in particular
- **Higher prevalence** of harmful/hazardous drinking in offenders when compared to the general population
- Alcohol-related crime costs Scottish economy over **£700m** per annum
- Potential to **reduce health-inequalities** in a **hard-to-reach group** unlikely to engage in other mainstream health improvement initiatives
- Potential **'teachable moment'**
- Alcohol problems may be one factor **inhibiting rehabilitation** and **influencing recidivism**

Criminal Justice ABIs: Evidence Base



- Limited evidence for the effectiveness of ABIs to offenders in criminal justice settings, but...
 - Identified as a potential setting where they can be effective (NTA, 2007; NICE, 2010)
- SIPS Criminal Justice Trial ABI trial (Probation)
 - All three brief intervention approaches of different intensity were followed by significant reductions in excessive drinking

Where in Criminal Justice can ABIs be delivered?



Criminal Justice
Social Work



Criminal Justice
Social Work

Voluntary Sector



Arrest
Charge

Conviction

Sentence
Community

Sentence
Prison/YOI

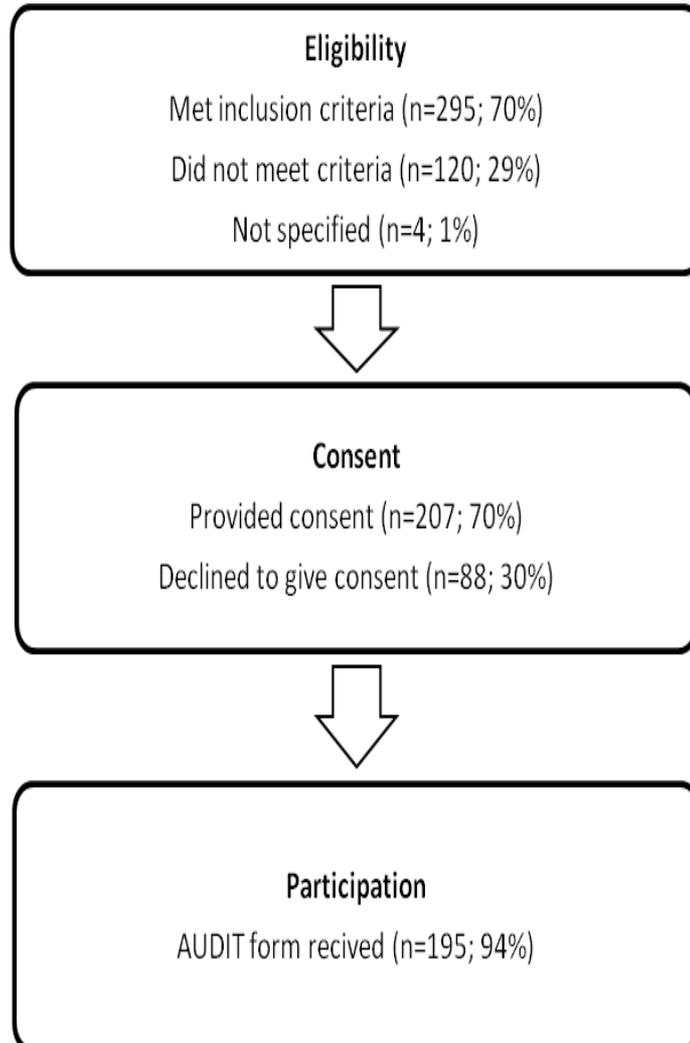
Post Sentence

CJ ABI pilot: Design



- Aim: to determine the **feasibility** and **effectiveness** of delivering screening and **ABIs** in the community justice settings of **probation** and **community service**
- Three pilot sites (mix of urban / rural populations)
- Single blind randomisation to either:
 - Screening and leaflet (1/2 day training)
 - Screening and ABI (full day training)
- Follow up at three & six month intervals

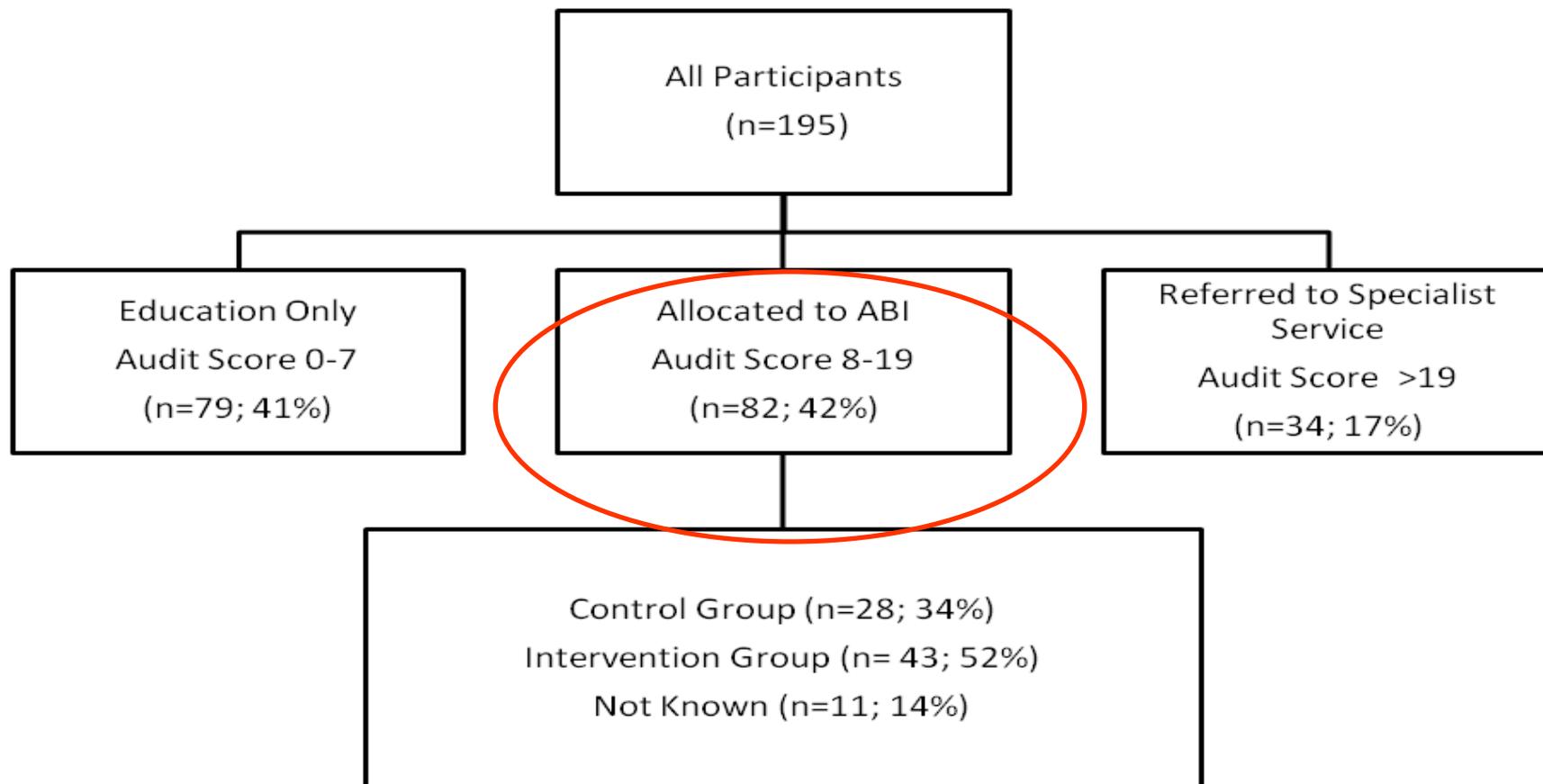
Results: Eligibility / Consent



Key points:

- 419 offenders assessed across probation & community service
- Approx three-quarters (70%) of CJ clients 'eligible' to participate
- Consent ~ 70%, but variable across pilot areas

Results: Screening



Results: Follow-Up



	Area A	Area B	Area C	Total (n)
Total Participants (scoring 8-19 at initial assessment)	20	22	40	82
Total Followed up (3 months)	5	4	2	11
Total Followed up (6 months)	5	-	2	7*
Total where other outcome was known (e.g. order completed, order breached, referred elsewhere)	8	5	21	34
Total lost to Follow-Up	2	13	15	32

* two people were followed up at both 3 and 6 months so the 18 follow-up forms relate to 16 individual clients

Results: Training



- Staff Training - 5 pre and post course differences
 - ① Respondents had a clearer idea of their responsibilities in helping clients who are considered to be risky drinkers (+)
 - ② A larger proportion of respondents felt that clients could make good progress towards achieving sensible drinking levels with the right support (+)
 - ③ More respondents felt able to work with clients who are considered to be risky drinkers as with people who are not (+)
 - ④ Fewer respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had the right to ask clients with whom they come into contact with, questions about their drinking (-)
 - ⑤ Fewer people felt sympathy for risky drinkers post-training compared to pre-training (-)

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Results: Qualitative



Online Staff Survey:-

■ Timing

“This is done at too late a stage...it would have been better to moderate ABI at SER [pre-sentencing] stage”

“Time constraints, as it is done as an ‘add on’ to existing pre-placement interview, which prior to ABI takes 45mins”

■ Role Adequacy

“I do not feel that I have the detailed, specialist knowledge or skills to undertake such work”

“I mean, alcohol interventions are kind of our bread and butter, you know, we do this a lot so it [training] was pitched at the wrong level for us, definitely”

■ Target Group

“My own professional opinion is that this may have been more successful if aimed at younger age group as most of our adult clients already have significant alcohol histories and associated difficulties”

“It’s, kind of, targeted at more middle of the road clients, and I don’t have that, I work with the extremes...they are either alcoholics or they are drug users”

Results: Qualitative



Online Staff Survey:-

- **Appropriateness / Usefulness**

“It’s a reminder and a useful tool to start a discussion about alcohol issues, particularly where the person has initially said there are no alcohol problems, especially where the client has said there are not problems but then you go through the tool and suddenly things do come out so it does act as a help and has improved practice slightly’ (+)

“Not sure how a five minute conversation can motivate someone to change their drinking behaviour” (-)

“Wrong place, wrong environment, wrong client group” (-)

Summary



- High prevalence of alcohol problems in offenders
- ABIs have *potential* to be effective in CJ settings
- Community Justice clients eligible and willing to consent to ABI
- Screening and ABIs *can* be accommodated into routine community justice practice
- Contrasting staff views on ABI *feasibility* in practice
- Limited evidence of effectiveness, lack of follow-up data



Thank you

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