

Drug offences and County Lines

Reports have been provided to Panel previously to update them on progress in tackling drug crime in North Yorkshire, particularly County Lines. The following report provides an update on those previous reports. North Yorkshire Police will attend the meeting to provide further detail verbally.

Impact of Covid on drug offences

Since the last update, the pandemic has had a noticeable impact on levels of crime nationally and locally. This is similar for drug offences. When lockdown first occurred in March 2020, there was a spike in recorded drug offences. With the significant reduction in people moving around and being outside, those moving drugs around were more visible. Figure 1 shows these spikes in recorded offences correlating with periods of lockdown. North Yorkshire Police (NYP) continued to capitalise on this with specific operations targeting dealers and County Lines and there have been numerous successes in closing Lines down over this period which are outlined below. Beyond this there has been no notable long-term impact on drug crime from Covid following this initial spike.

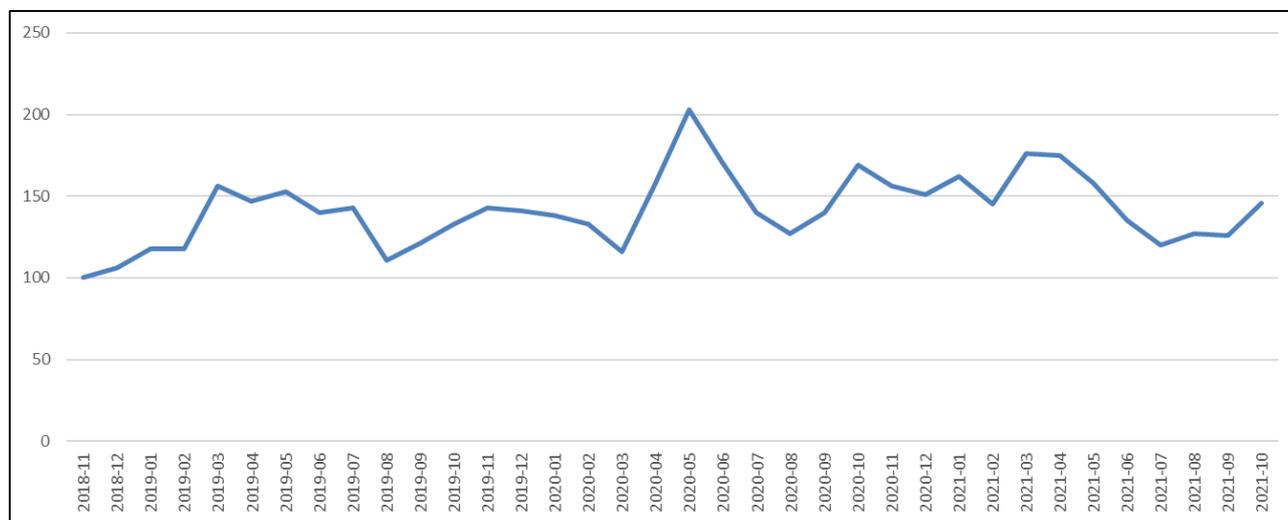


Figure 1: Drug Offences recorded between 01 November 2018 – 31 October 2021

County Lines

North Yorkshire remains an importing area with most Lines originating in Merseyside, Manchester, West and South Yorkshire, and London into Harrogate, York and Scarborough (see figure 2). In 2020 36 County Lines, using 94 different telephone numbers, were identified, of which only three remained active by the end of the year. In 2021 26 County Lines were identified, of which 10 Lines remain active. Some Lines have been active for some time making them harder to disrupt, and as Lines are successfully disrupted new Lines tend to emerge to take their place, so this continues to be a major priority for NYP as part of their Control Strategy.

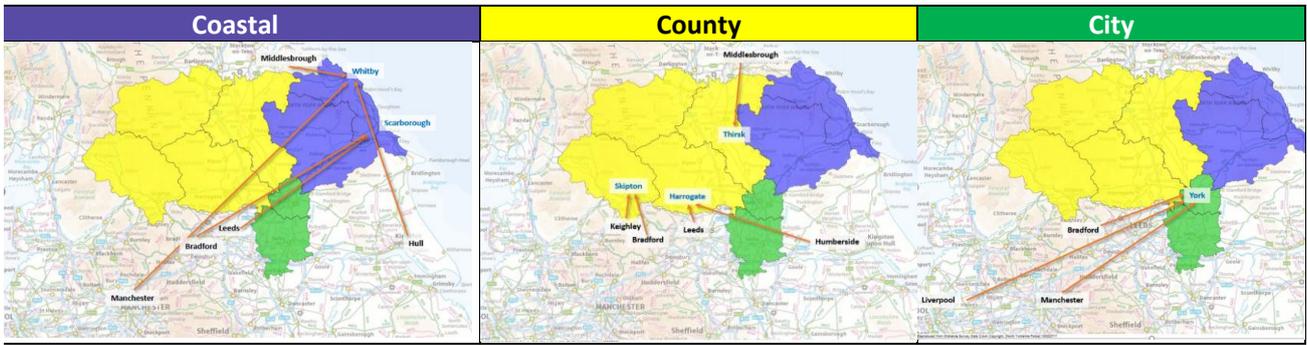


Figure 2: County Lines into North Yorkshire by NYP Command area

In 2021, NYP’s actions resulted in 29 individuals being handed over 100 years of prison time in the most high profile cases, with a further 18 charged in October and 34 arrested over 2 weeks of intensive County Lines disruption in which over £10,000 was seized in the first week alone.

Previously NYP had struggled to get appropriate funding to support their County Lines operations but, while this remains a wider issue, they have successfully obtained national surge funding and funding from exporting policing areas over the last year. NYP also continues to contribute to the national and regional intelligence picture, closely engaged in national response and disruption co-ordination and proactive activity.

NYP continues to work closely with partner agencies to tackle cuckooing of vulnerable persons by County Lines gangs. Co-ordinated through a dedicated working group under the Serious Organised Crime Partnership Board, NYP and partners use the Blue Guardian principles to exchange information in relation to locations and individuals to ensure that safeguarding is consistent and interventions are as early as possible to prevent harm.

Drug Deaths

There have been over 90 drug-related deaths in 2021 making this a priority for NYP and partners. NYP have expanded and improved their approach to signposting drug users to rehabilitative care and support, co-ordinating a treatment taskforce on the back of enforcement activity. Many deaths are linked to multiple drugs, and unfortunately to prescription or over-the-counter medication or drugs. Cocaine and Heroin are linked to at least 20 deaths. A drug and Alcohol Related Deaths Report has commenced in partnership with Public Health.

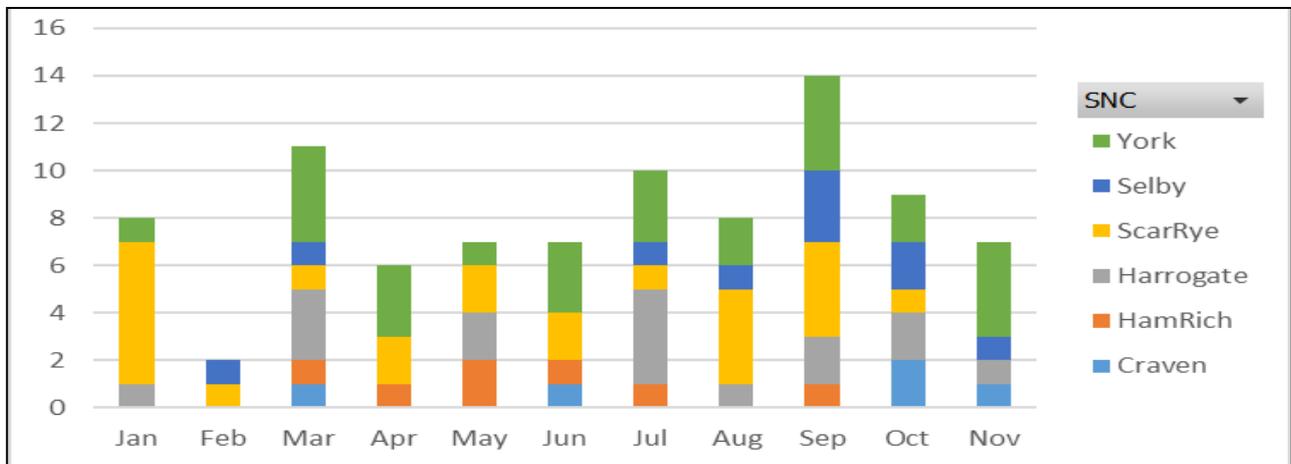


Figure 3: Drug Deaths by District and by month Jan-Nov 2021

NYP Drugs Strategy

In response to a national refresh following the Dame Carol Black report and the new Government strategy, North Yorkshire Police have refreshed their Drugs Strategy to reduce harm from and supply of illicit drugs in North Yorkshire. In line with NYP's strategic approach, this focuses heavily on prevention and early intervention, seeking to remove demand and tackle root causes of substance abuse and supply, and embed a trauma-informed approach, enhancing the ability of officers to move vulnerable people onto treatment referral pathways and offender management programmes. It will further strengthen NYP's ability to identify and prosecute those who exploit, abuse and traffick, with new protocols, such as drug testing on arrest, being brought into use.

To deliver on this, NYP will work closely with OPFCC, Public Health and Local Authority colleagues through the Drug and Alcohol Partnership to consider how we can collaborate and co-commission innovative services that can support this approach.