Reconvictions of drink/drive course attenders: a six year follow up

Prepared for Road Safety Division, Department for Transport

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Executive Summary

Introduction
The Road Traffic Act 1991 allowed certain ‘designated’ Courts to offer drink/drive offenders the opportunity of attending a rehabilitation course. In the designated Courts it was in the remit of the Magistrate to offer a rehabilitation course to an offender, and if the course was successfully completed the period of disqualification would be reduced by up to a quarter. Since January 2000 this scheme has been made permanent and is now expanding to cover the whole of Great Britain.

TRL Limited has monitored the effectiveness of the rehabilitation courses for the Department for Transport (DfT). TRL Report TRL426 (Davies et al., 1999a) discussed the results of the evaluation of the courses. It followed a sample of offenders who were either convicted at the original Courts (where it was possible for them to be referred for rehabilitation courses), or at similar ‘control’ Courts (where the courses were not available at that time). These offenders were sentenced between the commencement of the courses in 1993 and 31 July 1996. Data on reconviction rates were available up to 31 December 1998. Report 426 investigated the effect of selection bias (i.e. the possibility that offenders predisposed against reoffending were more likely to be offered, accept and complete courses than offenders predisposed to reoffend) on the data on reconvictions. It concluded that its effect on reconviction rates of course attenders was small compared with the effect of the rehabilitation courses.

Method
Data are now available on these offenders up to 31 December 2001. This report examines reconvictions of this original sample of offenders convicted of a drink/driving offence at the original referring Courts between 1993 and July 1996, from their date of conviction for that offence until the end of December 2001.

Results
Data on reconvictions of course and non-course attenders are now available for at least 72 months for over 80 per cent of the sample. At 72 months over 99 per cent of the offenders should have had their licence returned and been able to drive legally for at least a year.

After 72 months nearly two and a half times more non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended (17.9 per cent of non-course attenders compared with 7.6 per cent of course attenders). This ratio of the rate of reconvictions for non-course attenders to the rate for course attenders is similar at three, four, five and six years after conviction. The ratio is greater near the criterion conviction, since course attenders avoid reoffending while they are disqualified. The positive effect of the courses on reoffending rates which was reported after three years by Davies et al. (1999a) still persists after six years.

Conclusions
Although all course attenders reoffended less than non-course attenders, some groups were a cause for concern:

1 Men from the higher social groups with disqualification periods of 2 years or more. Between 30 and 36 months, reoffending rates of the course attenders in this group increased and approached (but did not pass) those for the non-course group. This increase in the level of reoffending has not continued, and between 42 and 72 months after conviction the course attenders’ reoffending rates are parallel to (and less than) the rates for non-course attenders. Although this is encouraging, it should be noted that the difference between the curves for course and non-course attenders is not statistically significant for this group. The same pattern is seen when drink/drive offenders from the higher social groups who come under the High Risk Offender (HRO) Scheme1 are examined (these drivers are disqualified for longer periods than non-HROs).

2 Young men (those under 30 years) in the lowest social group. Although course attenders do considerably better than the non-course attenders, at 72 months 17.8 per cent of course attenders have reoffended.

For men, after six years, the course was most successful for:

- offenders from the middle social groups;
- offenders aged between 30-39 years;
- offenders who have been convicted of two drink/drive offences with Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) between one and two and a half times the legal limit within ten years.

A major effect of attending a course appears to be that the offender is more likely to refrain from reoffending while disqualified than a non-course attender. Once the disqualification period has ended, the rate of reoffending of course attenders increases, but in spite of this, by 72 months course attenders have still reoffended less than non-course attenders.

Women drink/drive offenders reoffend less than male offenders; at 72 months 7.8 per cent of women who had not attended a course had reoffended compared with 3.7 per cent of course attenders.

Where the underlying rate of reconviction is low (7 to 8 per cent at 72 months), as for women, and for men who are 40 years or older, there is less room for improvement, and the effect of attending a course is less apparent.

\[1\] The scheme covers disqualified drivers in the following categories:
1. Those who provided an evidential sample with an alcohol level exceeding two and a half times the legal limit (equivalent to 200 mg/100ml BAC); 2. Those who provided an evidential sample with an alcohol level between one and two and a half times the legal limit (equivalent to 80-200 mg/100ml BAC) and have been convicted of a previous drink/driving offence in the previous ten years; and 3. Those who failed without reasonable cause to provide a specimen for analysis.
While this report looks at the early sample of rehabilitation course attenders, the DfT has also commissioned TRL to monitor and evaluate the scheme since the start of its expansion in 2000. Data on all drink/drive offenders involved in the scheme continue to be collected, and the results of this full scale monitoring will be reported at a later date.
1 Introduction

In 1988 the Road Traffic Law Review, ‘The North Report’, (Department of Transport/Home Office, 1988) recommended that Courts should be empowered to ‘order retraining as all or part of the sentence for offenders who are convicted of certain categories of driving offence, are assessed as being likely to benefit from retraining, and declare themselves willing to undertake it’. In particular, the report recommended that ‘an experiment should be undertaken in the use by selected Courts of retraining to influence attitudes to a disposal for first time drink/driving offenders with blood alcohol concentrations below 200 mg/100ml’. The report advised that the experiment should ‘assess the effectiveness of making this disposal available in terms of the proportion of such offenders convicted in the Courts concerned who are reconvicted of serious drinking offences within three years’.

Following these recommendations, Sections 30 and 31 of the Road Traffic Act 1991 (HMSO, 1991) introduced experimental powers enabling certain Courts in designated areas of England, Wales and Scotland to offer any drink/drive offender the opportunity of attending a rehabilitation course. If the offender successfully completed the course, the period of disqualification from driving could be reduced by up to a quarter. During the ‘experimental’ period the legislation allowed the Courts in designated areas to make referrals only until the end of 1997. In 1997, the Government extended this period to the end of 1999 by an Order in Parliament (SI 949/1997) and further areas were designated from which referrals can be made. Since January 2000 the scheme has been made permanent and is now expanding to cover the whole of Great Britain.

The participating Courts are advised that the courses are likely to be more suitable for first time offenders who were not convicted at very high blood alcohol levels, although those who come within the criteria laid down for the High Risk Offender (HRO) Scheme (see Appendix A for details) are not necessarily to be excluded. Rehabilitation courses are run by a number of different organisations including probation services, Local Authorities road safety departments, hospitals, charities and private companies. The courses are self-financing, with fees, currently ranging from £50 to £250, paid by the trainees. A typical course is organised into sessions lasting 2-4 hours per week for a period of 8-10 weeks with 8 to 10 offenders. The content of the courses is laid out in a framework provided by the DfT. A range of issues is covered in each rehabilitation course, including:

- information about alcohol and its effects on the body;
- the effect of alcohol consumption on performance, particularly driving ability and behaviour;
- analysis of drink/drive offences;
- alternatives to drinking and driving;
- sources of advice.

It is in the remit of the Magistrate to offer a rehabilitation course to an offender, who is informed of the fee he or she will have to pay (which is in addition to any fine) and that, if the course is completed successfully, the period of disqualification will be reduced by up to a quarter. The offender then decides whether to accept.

TRL Limited has monitored the effectiveness of the rehabilitation courses for the Department for Transport (DfT). TRL Report TRL426 (Davies et al., 1999a) discussed the results of the evaluation of the courses which were run during the experimental period. It followed a sample of offenders who were either convicted at the original ‘designated’ Courts (where it was possible for them to be referred for rehabilitation courses), or at similar ‘control’ Courts (where the courses were not available at that time). These offenders were sentenced between the commencement of the courses in 1993 and 31 July 1996. Data on reconviction rates were available up to 31 December 1998. Report 426 investigated the effect of selection bias (i.e. the possibility that offenders predisposed against reoffending were more likely to be offered, accept and complete courses than offenders predisposed to reoffend) on the data on reconvictions. It concluded that its effect on reconviction rates of course attenders was small compared with the effect of the rehabilitation courses. Consequently it was possible to compare reconvictions, over the 36 months after an offender had been convicted of a drink/drive offence, of those in the designated Courts who attended rehabilitation courses, with those at the same Courts who had not attended courses. Data are now available on these offenders up to 31 December 2001. This report examines reconvictions of this original sample of offenders convicted of a drink/drive offence at the original referring Courts between 1993 and July 1996, from their date of conviction for that offence (called here the ‘criterion’ offence) up until the end of December 2001. Section 2 examines reconvictions for a further drink/drive offence for course and non-course attenders, taking into account variables such as gender, social group, age, disqualification period and HRO status. Section 3 summarises the conclusions.

While this report looks at the early sample of rehabilitation course attenders, the DfT has also commissioned TRL to monitor and evaluate the scheme since the start of its expansion in 2000. Data on all drink/drive offenders involved in the scheme continue to be collected, and the results of this full scale monitoring will be reported at a later date.

2 Reconviction rates of offenders

Reconviction rates have been calculated from the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) driver licence records received by TRL in April 2002. There is a time lag between an offender being convicted and information from the Courts being entered onto DVLA’s database and so these data were assumed to be complete up to 31/12/01. This date was taken as the cut-off for the examination of reconvictions. The offenders in TRL’s sample were all convicted before 31/07/96, hence the minimum time between conviction for the criterion offence and 31/12/01
was 65 months. Table 1 shows the percentage of offenders with at least 66 months, at least 72 months and at least 78 months between the original offence under consideration (the ‘criterion’ offence) and 31/12/01.

Table 1 Percentage of offenders convicted at least 66 months, 72 months and 78 months before 31/12/01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At least 66 months</th>
<th>At least 72 months</th>
<th>At least 78 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of offenders</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/12/01</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-course attenders (N=15534)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course attenders (N=3528)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data are now available for at least 72 months for over 80 per cent of the sample. Hence reconviction rates over six years are examined in detail. Data for offenders who were convicted of their criterion offence up to six and a half years before the analyses are also included for completeness.

41 per cent of all offenders in the designated Courts were disqualified for 12 months or less, and 99.7 per cent for five years or less. At 72 months, therefore, over 99 per cent of offenders should have their licence returned and have been able to drive legally for at least a year.

Survival analysis has been used to examine reconviction rates. This type of analysis is concerned with the time interval between two events, a starting event and a terminal event. It was developed to compare the effectiveness of different treatments on the survival of patients with severe illnesses (Hull and Nie, 1979). The method is particularly useful in showing differences in reoffending between different groups, such as those who have attended a drink/drive rehabilitation course and those who have not. It is used in this case to analyse the time from the date of sentence for the criterion conviction to the date of sentence for the first drink/drive offence (if any) occurring after the criterion conviction; hence, ‘survival’ for a certain period is equated to not being reconvicted for a drink/drive offence during that period. Consequently, the following graphs present the proportion of a particular group of drink/drive offenders who have not been reconvicted, rather than the proportion who have. (See also Appendix B.)

The following Sections examine reconviction for a further drink/drive offence.

2.1 Reconvictions for course attenders and non-course attenders

Figure 1 shows survival curves for course attenders and non-course attenders at the designated Courts, that is, the percentage of offenders who have not been reconvicted of a further drink/drive offence up to 78 months. As stated earlier, TRL has data over 72 months for more than 80 per cent of offenders, and over 78 months for more than 65 per cent of them. There was a statistically significant difference in reconviction rates between course attenders and the non-course attenders.

Figure 2 shows the ratio of the reconviction rate of non-course attenders to that of course attenders over time. At 12 months about 8 times more non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended. This ratio had dropped to just under 4 at 24 months. However, since 48 months the ratio has stabilised at around 2.5. After 72 months just under two and a half times more non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended (17.9 per cent of non-course attenders compared with 7.6 per cent of course attenders). Around 30 per cent of offenders had disqualification periods of more than 24 months, at 48 months under 5 per cent were still disqualified and by 60 months 99 per cent would have reached the end of their disqualification period. Once most drivers are legally driving again there is a slight fall in the ratio to 2.4, although this change is not statistically significant. Section 2.1.2 examines the effect of disqualification period on rates of reoffending.

2.1.1 Variables affecting reconviction rates

As discussed by Davies et al. (1999a), there are differences between the rehabilitation course attenders and the others. One of the differences was in social groups. This analysis uses postcodes (available in the DVLA data) to examine the social background of offenders. The information on
postcodes was supplied by CACI Ltd, and is known as the ACORN directory (CACI, 1997). There are six ACORN Categories (A to F), the ‘highest’ social group being A, and the ‘lowest’ being F. (See Appendix C for more details of ACORN Categories.) More people from ACORN categories A and B and fewer from category F attend courses. In addition course attenders tend to be older than non-course attenders, there are relatively more people who have been disqualified for less than two years and there are fewer High Risk Offenders. The following factors were found to be associated with whether an offender is reconvicted or not and they are used in the survival analyses reported in Sections 2.1.2 to 2.1.5:

Whether they attended a course.

Sex of the offender.

ACORN grouping.

Age group.

Length of disqualification.

HRO status.

About 8 per cent of offenders from the designated Courts were women and female offenders make up 10 per cent of the group of course attenders. There are differences in the reoffending rates of men and women. For the non-course attenders 18.6 per cent of men had reoffended after 72 months compared to 7.8 per cent of women. For course attenders, 7.9 per cent of men had reoffended compared to 3.7 per cent of women. Male and female offenders are therefore discussed separately.

In the following Sections the groupings used for ACORN Categories (offenders in Categories A+B, C+D+E, and F), age (under 30, 30-39 and 40 years or over) and length of disqualification (disqualified for under 2 years or for 2 years or more) are those which were found to be appropriate in the earlier analyses.

### 2.1.2 Male offenders, social groups and length of disqualification

Male offenders were sorted into three groups, those from ACORN categories A and B, those from ACORN categories C, D and E and those from category F. Figure 3 shows proportions without further drink/drive offences for course and non-course attenders from each group. For each social grouping, the difference between the course and non-course attenders was examined using the Wilcoxon (Gehan) statistic (see Appendix B). The differences were statistically significant in each case. Reoffending rates at the end of 72 months for course and non-course attenders are shown in Table 2. The ratios of the reoffending rates of non-course attenders to those of course attenders have also been calculated and are included in the table. The ratios at 12, 24, 48 and 60 months are also included for comparison.

### Table 2 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months by ACORN category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>A and B</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>C, D and E</th>
<th>Category F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=970</td>
<td>N=1435</td>
<td>N=556</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-course</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=1823</td>
<td>N=4740</td>
<td>N=4074</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 60 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 72 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The very high ratio for group A+B at 12 months occurs because only one of the course attending group had reoffended in the first 12 months (2.5 per cent of non-course attenders had reoffended compared to 0.1 per cent of course attenders).

Table 2 and Figure 3 confirm that course attenders from each social grouping reoffend less than non-course attenders. In the first two years after conviction there is a large difference in reoffending rates as the course attenders refrain from reoffending in the earlier months, while many non-course attenders do not. By 72 months non-course attenders in each group had still reoffended at least twice as much as course attenders; however, over a three year period the ratio had decreased slightly for group C+D+E.
Figure 3 Proportion of male offenders without a further drink/drive offence, by social grouping
and group F. For non-course attenders, those in ‘higher’ social groups reoffend less than those in lower groups. This is not so for course attenders, where reoffending rates for Groups A+B and C+D+E are similar. Group C+D+E showed the highest relative improvement of the three groups after six years.

To take account of the severity of the offence, offenders were grouped into those disqualified for less than two years and those disqualified for two years or more. Because the courses are particularly aimed at first time offenders (see Sections 1 and 2.1.1), a larger percentage of course attenders had been disqualified for less than two years than of non-course attenders. Reconviction rates for each of the two disqualification groups were calculated for the social groupings used in Table 2.

Figure 4 shows the proportions of offenders who have not reoffended, for the two disqualification groups for course and non-course attenders in the three groups of ACORN categories. For each of the three groupings of social categories, the course attenders had reoffended less than the non-course attenders whether they had been disqualified for under 2 years, or 2 years and over.

As seen in Figure 4, the reoffending rate of non-course attenders increased steadily over 72 months, but this is not true for course attenders. The course attenders appeared to refrain from reoffending while they were disqualified. This is particularly noticeable for men with longer disqualifications from categories A+B and F. While the rate of reoffending increased for course attenders after the end of their disqualification period, it has not reached that of non-course attenders. At 72 months, the reconviction rate of course attenders in group A+B with longer disqualifications has increased more than those course attenders with shorter disqualification periods, and is close to that of non-course attenders. It should be noted that, for group A+B, there is no significant difference between the curve for course attenders and that for non-course offenders with longer disqualification periods.

Table 3 shows the percentage of men who have reoffended after 72 months for each group. After 72 months, course attenders disqualified for two or more years in categories A+B do less well than course attenders in the other ACORN categories, although course attenders still reoffend less than non-course attenders (the difference between the course and non-course attenders is not significant for this group, however). The group that benefits most from attending a course are offenders from categories C+D+E with longer disqualification periods. After six years three times more non-course attenders from this group had reoffended compared with the course attenders.

2.1.3 Male offenders, social groups and age

Offenders were divided into three age groups, using their age at the date of conviction for the reference offence: under 30 years, between 30 and 39 years and 40 years or older. Figure 5 shows proportion of male course attenders and non-course attenders in these groups who had not reoffended. They were also separated into the three ACORN groupings previously used.

For all but one of the ACORN groupings, differences between course and non-course offenders were statistically significant for all age groups. The exception was for offenders over 40 years old in ACORN categories A + B; for this group differences between course and non-course attenders were not significant. However, the non-course attenders in this group have a relatively low rate of reoffending (8.9 per cent at 72 months). As will also be seen when the reoffending behaviour of women is examined (Section 2.1.5), there is less room for improvement where there is a relatively low reoffending rate, so the effect of attending a course is less apparent.

Table 4 shows reoffending rates at the end of 72 months for each social grouping and age group. It shows that for non-course attenders, older people reoffended less than younger people; for course attenders at 72 months, however, the rate of reoffending for offenders in the middle age group is closer to that of the older offenders. Overall, course attenders aged between 30 and 39 years show the greatest reduction in reconviction rates.

Men under 30 have a particularly high rate of reoffending and it is encouraging that course attenders reoffend less than non-course attenders for all social groups. However, the overall rate six years after conviction of 17.8 per cent for young male course attenders in social group F was high. There is a sign of a possible ‘age effect’ for these young offenders, although this is not so apparent for the other age groups; the rate of offending of the Category F non-course attenders who are under 30 levels off after about 66 months (Figure 5). There is a similar effect for the course attenders of that age and social group; for young offenders from Group F, the ratio of reoffending rates of non-course to course attenders remains at around 1.6, between two and six years after conviction for the reference offence.

2.1.4 Male High Risk Offenders

Nearly 30 per cent of course attenders were HROs, although the rehabilitation scheme was not originally intended for these offenders (see Appendix A for details of the High Risk Offender Scheme). At 72 months about 2.2 times more non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended, whether they were HROs or not. (For non-HROs: the reoffending rate for non-course attenders was 15.4 per cent and for course attenders it was 6.6 per cent; for HROs: the reoffending rate for non-course attenders was 22.5 per cent and for course attenders it was 10.1 per cent.) The reoffending rates for HROs and non-HROs in the three social groups used in the earlier Sections have been examined. Figure 6 shows the proportions without a further drink/drive offence for each social group, for HROs and non-HROs who had attended courses and those who had not.

Course attenders reoffend less than non-course attenders, whether they are HROs or not. However, there are differences in the patterns of reoffending for HROs and non-HROs who attend courses. For group A+B the rates of reoffending for both groups of course attenders are similar until about 30 months after the criterion offence. After this
**Figure 4** Proportion of male offenders without further drink/drive offences, by disqualification period: less than 2 years or 2 years or more.
Figure 5 Proportion of male offenders without further drink/drive offences, by age group and social grouping
time HROs who attend courses reoffend more than non-HROs who attend courses. (The difference between the curves is statistically significant.) A similar (but small) effect can be seen in the curves for course attenders in group C+D+E, although the difference between the curves is not significant.

For offenders from ACORN group F, however, there is no significant difference between the reoffending rates of HROs and non-HROs who attend courses. It is also of interest that for group F, there is no significant difference between the curves showing reconviction rates for HROs and non-HROs who are not course attenders. Research on High Risk Offenders has shown that a driver from Category F is about two-fifths more likely to be an HRO than a typical driver (Davies et al., 1999b).

Table 5 gives reoffending rates at 72 months for HROs and non-HROs. The ratios of non-course to course attenders are given for 60 and 72 months.

| Table 3 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months by disqualification period |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Disqualification period                      | Categories A and B                              | Categories C, D and E                           | Category F                                   |
|                                              | <2 years                                       | ≥2 years                                       | <2 years                                     | ≥2 years                                     |
| Course                                       | 5.0%                                           | 13.3%                                         | 6.2%                                         | 6.1%                                         | 11.8%                                        | 11.1%                                        |
| Number in group                              | N=606                                          | N=189                                         | N=1001                                       | N=279                                        | N=377                                        | N=119                                        |
| Non-course                                   | 11.7%                                          | 16.0%                                         | 15.5%                                        | 19.7%                                        | 21.2%                                        | 23.6%                                        |
| Number in group                              | N=1170                                         | N=635                                         | N=2817                                       | N=1884                                       | N=2117                                       | N=1926                                       |
| Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders: |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |
| At 12 months                                  | 10.5                                          | –                                              | 3.0                                          | 13.6                                         | 5.7                                          | –                                              |
| At 24 months                                  | 3.0                                           | 3.1                                            | 4.7                                          | 22.1                                         | 2.2                                          | 5.6                                            |
| At 36 months                                  | 2.7                                           | 1.3                                            | 3.0                                          | 7.6                                          | 2.3                                          | 3.1                                            |
| At 48 months                                  | 2.1                                           | 1.3                                            | 2.8                                          | 3.5                                          | 2.3                                          | 2.9                                            |
| At 60 months                                  | 2.2                                           | 1.3                                            | 2.7                                          | 3.4                                          | 2.1                                          | 3.0                                            |
| At 72 months                                  | 2.4                                           | 1.2                                            | 2.5                                          | 3.2                                          | 1.8                                          | 2.1                                            |

* No course attenders from groups A+B and F with longer disqualification periods had reoffended by 12 months after disqualification for their reference offence.

Table 4 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months by age group

| Table 4 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months by age group |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Age group                                    | Categories A and B                              | Categories C, D and E                           | Category F                                   |
|                                              | < 30 yrs                                       | 30-39                                         | ≥40 yrs                                       | < 30 yrs                                     | 30-39                                         | ≥40 yrs                                       | < 30 yrs                                     | 30-39                                         | ≥40 yrs                                       |
| Course                                       | 9.1%                                           | 5.9%                                          | 5.2%                                         | 7.5%                                         | 6.2%                                          | 5.4%                                         | 17.8%                                        | 7.8%                                          | 8.1%                                         |
| Number in group                              | N=346                                          | N=238                                         | N=386                                        | N=515                                        | N=438                                         | N=482                                        | N=186                                        | N=181                                         | N=189                                        |
| Non-course                                   | 16.1%                                          | 13.4%                                         | 8.9%                                         | 21.2%                                        | 17.0%                                         | 11.4%                                        | 28.9%                                        | 20.8%                                         | 14.6%                                        |
| Number in group                              | N=830                                          | N=470                                         | N=523                                        | N=2060                                       | N=1413                                        | N=1267                                       | N=1635                                       | N=1372                                         | N=1066                                       |
| Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders: |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |
| At 12 months                                  | –                                              | –                                              | 7.3                                          | 4.5                                          | –                                              | 2.8                                          | 4.3                                          | –                                              | –                                              |
| At 24 months                                  | 2.9                                           | 2.9                                            | 2.5                                          | 5.5                                          | –                                              | 3.0                                          | 1.6                                          | 7.3                                           | 5.0                                           |
| At 36 months                                  | 2.4                                           | 1.4                                            | 1.9                                          | 5.5                                          | –                                              | 1.9                                          | 1.6                                          | 7.1                                           | 2.9                                           |
| At 48 months                                  | 1.8                                           | 2.4                                            | 1.5                                          | 3.7                                          | 3.4                                            | 1.9                                          | 1.7                                          | 4.7                                           | 2.6                                           |
| At 60 months                                  | 1.9                                           | 2.4                                            | 1.3                                          | 3.4                                          | 3.3                                            | 2.1                                          | 1.8                                          | 3.4                                           | 2.4                                           |
| At 72 months                                  | 1.8                                           | 2.3                                            | 1.7                                          | 2.8                                          | 2.7                                            | 2.1                                          | 1.6                                          | 2.7                                           | 1.8                                           |

* No course attenders from groups A+B and F with longer disqualification periods had reoffended by 12 months after disqualification for their reference offence.

Table 5 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months. High Risk Offenders and non-High Risk Offenders by ACORN groups

| Table 5 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months. High Risk Offenders and non-High Risk Offenders by ACORN groups |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Disqualification period                       | Categories A and B                              | Categories C, D and E                           | Category F                                   |
|                                              | HRO                                           | Non-HRO                                       | HRO                                          | Non-HRO                                       | HRO                                          | Non-HRO                                       |
| Course                                       | 10.4%                                         | 4.8%                                          | 7.5%                                         | 6.0%                                          | 10.9%                                        | 11.2%                                        |
| Number in group                              | N=240                                         | N=723                                         | N=391                                        | N=1042                                        | N=167                                        | N=388                                        |
| Non-course                                   | 15.3%                                         | 12.0%                                         | 19.3%                                        | 15.6%                                         | 23.5%                                        | 21.2%                                        |
| Number in group                              | N=764                                         | N=1059                                        | N=2240                                       | N=2500                                        | N=2256                                       | N=1818                                       |
| Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders: |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |                                               |
| At 60 months                                  | 1.5                                           | 2.5                                           | 2.8                                          | 3.1                                           | 2.8                                          | 2.2                                           |
| At 72 months                                  | 1.5                                           | 2.5                                           | 2.6                                          | 2.6                                           | 2.2                                          | 1.9                                           |
Figure 6 Proportion of male offenders without further drink/drive offences: HROs and ACORN groups
Drivers who come under the High Risk Offender Scheme have been subdivided into the three groups as described in Appendix A:

1. Those with a BAC exceeding two and a half times the legal limit (>200mg/100ml) (‘High BAC’).
2. Those with two offences between one and two and a half times the legal BAC limit (80mg/100ml) within ten years (‘Multiple offenders’).
3. Those who have refused a specimen (‘Refusers’).

It should be noted that these three groups are not mutually exclusive: offenders in Groups 1 and 3 may have been convicted of an earlier offence between one and two and a half times the legal limit. Offending rates of the two ‘multiple offender’ sub-groups of the High BAC and Refusers have been examined in a previous report on the HRO scheme. (Broughton, 2002). For simplicity Groups 1 and 3 will not be subdivided in this analysis.

Table 6 gives reoffending rates at 72 months for these three HRO types and for non-HROs. The ratios of non-course to course attenders are given for 60 and 72 months.

### Table 6 Percentage of male offenders reoffending after 72 months. Three High Risk Offenders types and non-High Risk Offenders by ACORN groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HRO groups</th>
<th>High BAC</th>
<th>Multiple offenders</th>
<th>Refusers</th>
<th>Non-HRO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=481</td>
<td>N=279</td>
<td>N=124</td>
<td>N=2336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-course</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=3245</td>
<td>N=2270</td>
<td>N=1028</td>
<td>N=7955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders:**
- At 60 months: 2.0, 3.4, 2.4, 2.6
- At 72 months: 1.8, 3.2, 2.1, 2.3

Drivers from all three HRO groups who attend courses have a lower reoffending rate than those who do not. Those with two offences within ten years between one and two and a half times the limit benefit the most, with about three times more non-course attenders than course attenders reoffending after 72 months.

### 2.1.5 Female offenders

Women form only a small proportion of convicted drink/drive offenders (around 8 per cent at the time this sample were convicted of the criterion offence), and about 10 per cent of course attenders examined here were women. The numbers (295 course attenders, 1012 offenders who did not attend a course) are relatively small, so the differences are generally not statistically significant and the discussion below can give only an indication of the reoffending behaviour of women. Because of the small numbers involved, a further offence by only one or two offenders can appear as a large step change in the survival curves, so these curves are not reproduced here.

At 72 months, 7.8 per cent of women who had not attended a course had reoffended, compared with 3.7 per cent of course attenders. (The equivalent figures for male offenders are 18.6 per cent for non-course attenders and 7.9 per cent for course attenders.) About twice as many women non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended after 6 years.

When women offenders are grouped by ACORN category, age, length of sentence and HRO status there is, in most cases, a low rate of reoffending (7 to 8 per cent 72 months after conviction) for both course and non-course attenders. When the underlying reoffending rate (i.e. that of non-course attenders) is low, attendance at a course makes little or no difference in reoffending rates at 72 months. This effect was also seen for older men in social group A+B (see Section 2.1.3). However, there appears to be some reduction in reoffending by course attenders in two groups where the reoffending rate of non-course offenders was over 9 per cent at 72 months. They are shown in Table 7. It should be noted, as stated earlier, that the numbers in the groups are relatively small, and differences between course and non-course attenders for the groups are not statistically significant.

### Table 7 Percentage of women reoffending, for groups which show positive effects of rehabilitation courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 30 to 39</th>
<th>Disqualified for 2 years or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-course</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in group</td>
<td>N=344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ratio of non-course attenders to course attenders:**
- At 60 months: 2.8, 4.7
- At 72 months: 2.4, 5.6

### 3 Conclusions

This report examines reconviction rates of a sample of offenders convicted of a drink/drive offence at a number of ‘designated’ Courts between 1993 and July 1996. In the designated Courts it was in the remit of the Magistrate to offer a rehabilitation course to an offender, and if the course was successfully completed the period of disqualification would be reduced by up to a quarter. Data on reconvictions of course and non-course attenders are now available for at least 72 months for over 80 per cent of the sample. At 72 months over 99 per cent of the offenders should have had their licence returned and been able to drive legally for at least a year.

After 72 months nearly two and a half times more non-course attenders than course attenders had reoffended (17.9 per cent of non-course attenders compared with 7.6 per cent of course attenders). This ratio of the rate of reconvictions for non-course attenders to the rate for course attenders is similar at three, four, five and six years.
after conviction. The ratio is greater near the criterion conviction, since course attenders avoid reoffending while they are disqualified. The positive effect of the courses on reoffending rates which was reported after three years by Davies et al. (1999a) still persists after six years.

For men, after six years, the course was most successful for:

- offenders from the middle social groups (ACORN categories C+D+E);
- offenders aged between 30 and 39 years;
- offenders who come under the High Risk Offenders scheme because they have been convicted of two drink/drive offences with BAC between one and two and a half times the legal limit within ten years.

A major effect of attending a course appears to be that the offender is more likely to refrain from reoffending while disqualified than a non-course attender. Once the disqualification period has ended, the rate of reoffending of course attenders increases, but in spite of this, by 72 months course attenders have still reoffended less than non-course attenders.

Women drink/drive offenders reoffend less than male offenders; at 72 months 7.8 per cent of women who had not attended a course had reoffended compared with 3.7 per cent of course attenders.

Where the underlying rate of reconviction is low (7 to 8 per cent at 72 months), as for women, and for men who are 40 years or older, there is less room for improvement, and the effect of attending a course is less apparent.

Although all course attenders reoffended less than non-course attenders, some groups were a cause for concern:

1 Men from the higher social groups with disqualification periods of 2 years or more. Between 30 and 36 months, reoffending rates of the course attenders in this group increased and approached (but did not pass) those for the non-course group. This increase in the level of reoffending has not continued, and between 42 and 72 months after conviction the course attenders’ reconviction rates are parallel to (and less than) the rates for non-course attenders. Although this is encouraging, it should be noted that the difference between the curves for course and non-course attenders is not statistically significant for this group. The same pattern is seen when drink/drive offenders from the higher social groups who are HROs are examined (these drivers are disqualified for longer periods than non-HROs).

2 Young men (those under 30 years) in the lowest social group. Although course attenders do considerably better than the non-course attenders, at 72 months 17.8 per cent of course attenders have reoffended.

4 References


Appendix A: The High Risk Offender scheme

The High Risk Offender scheme is intended to deal with drivers whose apparent dependency on alcohol presents a risk to road safety.

The scheme was set up in 1983 and its scope was extended in 1990. The scheme now covers disqualified drivers in the following categories:

1. those who provided an evidential sample with an alcohol level exceeding two and a half times the legal limit (equivalent to 200 mg/100ml BAC);
2. those who provided an evidential sample with an alcohol level between one and two and a half times the legal limit (equivalent to 80-200 mg/100ml BAC) and have been convicted of a previous drink/drive offence in the previous ten years;
3. those who failed without reasonable cause to provide a specimen for analysis.

Under the HRO scheme offenders are required to satisfy the Medical Adviser at the DVLA that they do not have a drink problem and are fit to drive before their licences are returned.

The DVLA notifies offenders covered by the scheme what they need to do to apply for the return of their licence. There is a charge for applying for the restoration of the licence. A fee must also be paid for the necessary medical examination.
Appendix B: Survival analysis

TRL’s database has been used to calculate the number of months since each offender’s ‘starting event’ (i.e. the date of sentence for the ‘criterion offence’ for drink/driving). All of the offenders on the database were sentenced at least 24 months before the analysis was carried out. However, for any longer time period, before calculating the proportion of offenders reoffending during a three month time interval an estimate is made of the total number of offenders at risk during that interval. For example, at the beginning of the time interval 30 to 33 months, the sample at risk contains a number of offenders (N) who have been disqualified for at least 30 months. By the end of the three month interval some offenders (R) have reoffended, but others (X) may have been disqualified for less than 33 months. For simplicity these offenders (X) are assumed, on average, to have been observed for half an observation (X/2). Thus, for any time interval, the number at risk is calculated as (N-X/2), and the probability of a reoffence occurring is R/(N-X/2). Similarly, the probability of a reoffence occurring in the next three month interval is calculated. The cumulative probability of reoffending by the end of the second interval is calculated by finding the product of the two probabilities. This explanation is based on the account by Norusis (1990).

The Wilcoxon (Gehan) statistic tests the null hypothesis that the survival distributions are the same for each group. If, when two survival curves are compared, the probability of them being different is <0.0001, the null hypothesis that the groups do not differ can be rejected with great confidence, i.e. we are certain that there is a difference between course attenders and control court offenders.
CACI has classified each local area in Great Britain using a set of 54 ACORN types (CACI 1997). This is based on an extensive cluster analysis of data from the 1991 Census. The actual directory comprises a list of all British postcodes with the appropriate ACORN types for each postcode. As the great majority of DVLA driver records contain the driver’s postcode, it is possible to associate each driver with the ACORN type of the area where he or she lives. The 54 ACORN types are grouped into 17 ACORN Groups, which are further grouped into 6 ACORN Categories.

**Category A: Thriving**
Wealthy achievers, suburban areas.
Affluent greys, rural communities.
Prosperous pensioners, retirement areas.

**Category B: Expanding**
Affluent executives, family areas.
Well-off workers, family areas.

**Category C: Rising**
Affluent urbanites, town and city areas.
Prosperous professional, metropolitan areas.
Better-off executives, inner city areas.

**Category D: Settling**
Comfortable middle agers, mature home owning areas.
Skilled workers, home owning areas.

**Category E: Aspiring**
New home owners, mature communities.
White collar workers, better-off multi-ethnic areas.

**Category F: Striving**
Older people, less prosperous areas.
Council estate residents, better-off homes.
Council estate residents, high unemployment.
Council estate residents, greatest hardship.
People in multi-ethnic, low-income areas.

The basic unit of the cluster analysis which generates the ACORN codes covers almost 400 people on average, and clearly some areas of this size will contain individual addresses from two or more Types. The data are widely used by commercial customers, so in practice any errors are likely to be acceptably small.
Abstract

This report examines reconvictions of a sample of offenders convicted of a drink/drive offence at a number of ‘designated’ Courts between 1993 and July 1996. In the designated Courts it was in the remit of the Magistrate to offer a rehabilitation course to an offender, and if the course was successfully completed the period of disqualification would be reduced by up to a quarter. Data on reconvictions of course and non-course attenders are now available for at least six years for over 80 per cent of the sample. By six years over 99 per cent of the offenders should have their licence returned, and most will have been driving legally for at least a year. After six years just under two and a half times more non-course attenders than course attenders had committed a further drink/drive offence (17.9 per cent of non-course attenders compared with 7.6 per cent of course attenders).

Related publications

TRL543  The influence of cannabis and alcohol on driving by B F Sexton, R J Tunbridge, P G Jackson, M M Stark and K Englehart (price £25, code AX)
TRL232 Drinking and driving in Great Britain – a review by G Maycock. 1997 (price £25)
SR826 Drinking and driving habits, attitudes, and behaviour of male motorists by A B Clayton, P E McCarthy and J M Breen. 1984 (price £20)
SR 616 The drinking road user in Great Britain by B E Sabey and G C Staughton. 1980 (price £20)
SR600 The male drinking driver: characteristics of the offender and his offence by A B Clayton, P E McCarthy and J M Breen. 1980 (price £20)
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