



Tackling drugs, saving lives

SAS® helps Drug Action Team save time and target resources.

Industry

Public Sector

Business Issue

Reporting on and improving performance in a complex multi-agency environment: improving data quality, speeding up statutory reporting and optimising the allocation of scarce administrative and front-line resources.

Solution

SAS® Analytics and SAS® Enterprise Guide® for reporting on national KPIs and at a more detailed level for local operations.

Benefits

Working faster and more proactively in a 'joined-up' way across agencies by identifying trends, assessing needs and targeting resources more effectively to deliver improved treatments – improved data quality, massive time savings and greater insights provided.

The Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) in the London Borough of Croydon has deployed SAS® Analytics to automate statutory reporting, using the time saved for value-added analysis to improve joined-up working at a local level. SAS helps the team to monitor agency performance, perform the annual Needs Assessment, budget more effectively and target resources to have the biggest impact. The DAAT has also started to carry out analysis across quarterly Green Reports to identify trends, predict future behaviours and so enable more effective preventative action.

Croydon's Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) uses SAS® to help plan treatment modernisation services that deliver effective treatment structures for substance misuse; this helps to ensure the work of local agencies and cross-agency projects comes together successfully while saving a huge amount of time in statutory reporting.

"SAS enables us to perform analysis in line with national key performance indicators," says Ray Rajagopalan, Data Manager at Croydon DAAT. "But we can also go further and provide far more detailed analysis at the local level, monitoring the agencies that we commission and exploring ways to deliver an improved treatment structure. Having an analytical platform gives the DAAT a range of benefits in terms of the ability to perform timely automated analysis. The SAS platform also helps in more comprehensive qualitative local analysis that feeds into strategic processes by producing local performance monitoring reports. For example, improved Key

Performance Indicator (KPI) reports allow the team to challenge budget allocations more effectively; it has confidence in the accuracy of its reports and data can be audited. DAAT commissioners are now better prepared for performance monitoring meetings, while time is also now available for testing to validate data sources before reports are published.

Most importantly, faster reporting enables early indicators to be identified and corrective action taken far earlier in the reporting cycle. Staff can spend more time understanding the results and establishing trends relating to clients, treatments and offences and take faster action, enhancing performance and delivering improved outcomes in tackling drug abuse and helping substance misusers.

Massive time savings plus more insights for better outcomes

Drug Action Teams are responsible for delivering the government's National Drug and Alcohol Strategies. This means tracking performance against targets and reporting to the National Treatment Agency (NTA) for substance misuse and the Home Office, plus other stakeholders that include local partners and an internal audience of DAAT commissioners.

The DAAT must take strategic decisions on expenditure and service delivery within the four main areas of young people, communities, treatment and availability. Its budget is based on allocations from the Pool Treatment Budget (PTB) and Drug Interventions

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Ray Rajagopalan
Data Manager, Croydon Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)

Programme (DIP) budget, the latter including a criminal justice element. In general, the team wants to achieve the biggest impacts, using available resources and working within budgets. To achieve this, effective analysis and fast reporting are vital.

Ray Rajagopalan says, “Before SAS we used basic packages, primarily Microsoft Excel and Access. The problems came with lots of data and no platform to facilitate comprehensive analyses in a short time. In addition, the DAAT must address numerous operational issues locally that require more detailed analyses: “Looking at client profiles, determining if processes have been put in place properly, loopholes in the system, and so on.”

The team not only wanted better visibility of operations ‘on the ground’ but also to automate parts of the production of monthly ‘Green Reports’ from National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) data and provide KPIs for the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP). With SAS, reports can now be produced within half a day compared to a week or more previously. “Preparing the reports could take one person nearly a week if they had other tasks too,” says Ray Rajagopalan. “Using SAS we can produce our statutory reports in a matter of hours”.

The SAS® solution

The initial SAS platform was implemented in 2008 with the help of SAS partner Base 3. Work was soon complete on selected national reporting elements, with ‘anytime’

reporting available, while development continued on detailed local analyses. “SAS will be integral to putting together our annual Needs Assessment, especially the cross-theme analysis,” Ray Rajagopalan explains, “using more than one group of data to match the treatment element to the operational side.” This is designed to help deliver a more ‘joined up’ approach to intervention and treatment across agencies, leading to improved outcomes – and Croydon is already seeing impact in areas such as reduced waiting times for first intervention, with new opportunities available to create more comprehensive profiles of ‘at risk’ individuals, including types of offences committed. The team is able to focus on strengths in the process, reveal weaknesses and work to support future budget allocations – so resources are both available and can be directed where they are most needed.

“We can point to considerable time savings and improved resource allocation,” Ray Rajagopalan adds. “This is important in view of the large budget cuts faced by drug action teams: having the ability to run detailed analyses in-house in a structured way is important as I’m pretty much a ‘one-man band’.

‘Tackling drugs – saving lives’

The DAAT is also working towards providing more support to the agencies it commissions, by using SAS to quality check their data, providing reports and analysis. The agencies, which tender for work, have service level agreements for the duration

of their contract, defining what they must monitor and report on. “There’s a lot of pressure on them to submit data reports,” says Rajagopalan. “Using SAS we can give far more comprehensive feedback to agencies on how they are performing on their KPIs. We can look at dropout rates, analyse at what stage a client leaves, and look at the parts that are working well. All of this feeds into our annual Needs Assessment, that feeds into our treatment plan and into budget allocations for the next year.” SAS is used to explore key issues and ensure the treatment structure meets the needs of the local population.

Ray Rajagopalan adds, “Once, the query templates are setup in SAS, the recurring analysis process is automated, which facilitates ease of use – and this is important.” Every Borough’s needs are different, whilst SAS’ flexibility gives the confidence to explore different approaches.

“Our goal is to provide the best treatment system to serve the needs of this borough. Using SAS to detect weaknesses now – rather than waiting a year or more before an issue becomes apparent – allows us to be more proactive and work at a faster pace. DAAT decision makers can get on with sorting problems out, making changes and possibly allocating resources differently to improve local treatment. Using SAS means we have confidence in the insights we provide and, ultimately, it improves the effectiveness of interventions – field workers can act before problems become more intractable.”



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SAS UK WITTINGTON HOUSE HENLEY ROAD MEDMENHAM
MARLOW BUCKS SL7 2EB +44 1628 486933 WWW.SAS.COM/UK

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