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| item: | 4 |
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UPDATE ON SUBSTANCE MISUSE ADVICE AND INFORMATION SERVICES by PoI McClelland

Summary

This Report is to update members of the joint Committee on the positive developments in improving the delivery of Substance Misuse Services to children and young people in Highland.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In recent years the delivery of the independent advice and guidance service to children and young people, their parents and other professionals, was by the *Blast* Project situated in premises in Inverness. This provided a 'drop in' and telephone service as well as some individual counselling sessions.
- 1.2 *Blast* was also involved in some limited outreach work outside Inverness through road shows and visits to some schools.
- 1.3 The *Blast* project has been jointly funded by Highland Council (£40,000) and NHS Highland (£20,000) per annum.
- 1.4 In the spring of 2008, due to *Blast* experiencing significant staffing problems which impacted on their ability to effectively deliver this service, negotiations were commenced with Action for Children Scotland (formerly known as NCH), an existing partner in the Youth Action Service, to evaluate their ability to take over and improve this service.

2. The New Proposed Substance Misuse Service

- 2.1 Many young people participate in high risk behaviours, which involve them taking a range of substances including alcohol and drugs, often in a very chaotic manner.
- 2.2 Substance misuse can result in young people becoming involved in other high risk behaviours, such as offending and inappropriate sexual activity. The review of the *Blast* service has offered the opportunity to ensure a comprehensive approach to substance misuse advice services, in line with the Governments new drugs strategy, to ensure a robust 'one stop shop' approach, building on the range of other services that are already being provided.

- 2.3 It is recognised that some of the major obstacles to effectively engaging with young people is their knowledge of what services are available and how easy they are able to access these services. It is considered that a 'one stop shop' approach, with an effective Highland wide communication strategy using a number of communication mediums, will be more successful in reaching its target audience of young people, their parents and other professionals.
- 2.4 The successful conclusion to the negotiations with Action for Children Scotland has resulted in a proposed revamped Substance Misuse 'one stop shop' service, which can incorporate the best aspects of the previous *Blast* service, whilst offering a wider ranging and more comprehensive service to young people from 12 to 18 years.
- 2.6 This service plans to engage directly with young people at a number of levels, from providing general advice and guidance, but also more individual support through their Inverness base and local 'surgeries' based in community resources.
- 2.7 It further plans to sign post young people to more specialised support such as sexual health services where this is deemed appropriate.
- 2.8 The initial development and implementation of this new service will be within the joint NHS Highland & Highland Council budget of £60,000. It is though, anticipated that the full roll out of this service, to ensure accessibility across all of Highland, would incur additional costs. It is envisaged that these costs might be met from further additional resources, and also from external funding bodies that Action for Children Scotland can apply to.
- 2.9 Action for Children plan to utilise some of their existing services such as the 'midnight football' to promote this new service, helping to maximise its impact on groups of young people who are hard to reach and difficult to engage with.
- 2.10 A further integral part to this service will be the development of closer working relationships with colleagues in the Highland Council & NHS Highland, to maximise knowledge and accessibility to this service.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 Aims

- To establish and develop a credible substance misuse youth advice resource, including outreach, drop-in, helpline and follow-on services.
- To identify those young people who are engaged in substance misuse and other risk taking behaviour, to include –

- Drug (illegal and prescribed) misuse
- Alcohol misuse
- Drug & Alcohol related Offending Behaviour
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Unsafe sexual activity
- To provide advice and information to parents and carers about substance misuse.
- To assess and “sign post on” those young people engaged in substance misuse and other risk taking behaviour and who may be motivated to seek treatment / specialist advice.
- To help to maintain and promote a healthy, safe and sustainable environment.
- To enhance and strengthen community safety initiatives.
- To create, develop and sustain effective partnerships.
- To help to deliver quality, proactive and responsive services in an effective way which provides value for money.

3.2 Objectives

- To reduce the numbers of young people in Highland involved in substance misuse through information sharing and individual support.
- To promote access by young people to services relevant to substance misuse, offending and anti-social behaviour, and/or risk taking behaviour.
- Motivate young people to access programmes or treatment or other services to address their substance misuse.
- Assess the extent young people’s co-operation to work with others on a programme of action and the extent of their commitment and willingness and ability to sustain this commitment.
- Get a far greater picture about individual young people engaged in or at risk of substance misuse and their circumstances.
- Share the above information with relevant partners where necessary/required and in accordance with Data Protection and Human Rights legislation.

4. Key Elements of the Service

4.1 The service will include the following key elements:

- Confidential telephone helpline
- Web based resource
- Inverness based drop in Centre
- Drop-In Advice Surgeries in locally based community resources
- One-to-one interviews (by appointment)
- Sign posting to specialist services
- Outreach services utilising Positive Options Project
- Follow-up support utilising Mentoring Project

5. Progress to date

- 5.1 Following discussions with staff of *Blast*, all interested staff were transferred to Action for Children or took voluntary redundancy.
- 5.2 *Blast's* premises were deemed not fit for purpose and the project has moved to Action for Children's offices in Inverness whilst alternative premises are sought.
- 5.3 Action for Children staff are to undertake induction in October, with training in the new remit of the service.
- 5.4 Whilst the telephone advice service will continue to operate, a date for the formal re-launch has to be agreed with partner agencies to maximise publicity.

Recommendation

It is recommended to members of the Committee that they support and endorse this new positive direction of this service, which will provide a more comprehensive and supportive one stop shop approach to young people and their families.

Poi McClelland

Resource Manager – Youth Justice & Substance Abuse