MEETING OF HIGHLAND COUNCIL  
10 OCTOBER 2002

Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Team

SUMMARY

This report outlines the national and local background to the Action Team, current structure, strategic direction, the link to national targets and initiatives, budgets, details of spend in Lochaber and future challenges.

There will be a presentation to Members which will cover, in more detail, the issues outlined in the Paper.

1. Background

The recommendation to establish Drug Action Teams (DAT) was contained in the Ministerial Task Force Report, headed by Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, published in November 1994. Alcohol Misuse Co-ordinating Committees (AMCCs) pre-dated the DAT by three years and in 1997 the DAT and AMCC were amalgamated to from the Highland Drug and Alcohol Strategy Group. At the April 2002 meeting of the Strategy Group members agreed to re-band the umbrella group for drugs and alcohol to the Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Teams.

1.2 Current Co-ordination Structure

A co-ordinating structure review report was accepted by HDAAT members earlier in 2002 and implementation is ongoing. The new structure is supported by a Strategy Implementation Manager, working closely with Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinators or equivalent, in Social Work Services, Education, Culture and Sport, Northern Constabulary and NHS Highland Board. The Implementation Manager line manages three Substance Misuse Development Officers (SMDOs), working to geographic combinations of Drug and Alcohol Forums, and Administrative and Clerical support remains to be decided.

The main benefits intended from the re-structuring are closer partnership working and sharing of responsibility at the pan-Highland and local levels. The SMDOs will spend a large part of their time (60%) working directly with Forums and assisting them to; generate an Annual Action Plan, implement and monitor progress and report, on a quarterly basis to the HDAAT.

1.3 Drug and Alcohol Forums

There are eight Forums, based in Highland Council Planning areas, whose main roles are to; ascertain the nature and extent of drug and alcohol related problems in their area, agree local priorities, compile an Annual Action Plan identifying intended outcomes and cost. Financial allocations are made to Forums, following submission of Action Plans, to assist in the delivery of the plans.
1.4 The HDAAT

This group is comprised of Chief Officers from Social Work Services, Education, Culture and Sport, Northern Constabulary and NHS Highland Board. All eight Chairs of the Forums are members as are the Governor of Porterfield Prison, the Regional Procurator Fiscal, a Voluntary Sector representative and the Head of Customs and Excise. The HDAAT is responsible for developing a strategy which fully addresses the national objectives and priorities for drugs. Each partner agency provides an Annual Action Plan, focussing on both drug and alcohol issues, which, together with actions decided by Forums, constitute a Corporate Action Plan.

1.5 Strategy

The strategy for drugs and alcohol was revised in 2000 and is reviewed annually. By end March 2003 each Action Team area in Scotland is required to provide, to the Scottish Executive a three-year rolling plan for Alcohol. It is anticipated that developmental monies for alcohol services will be made available, via the governmental spending review, and will in-turn require the same degree of rigour in reporting and forward planning as currently required for drug initiatives.

1.6 Link to National Targets and Initiatives

There are four key pillars contained in the national strategy for drugs. They are; Young People, Communities, Availability and Treatment. The work, previously described, to generate an Alcohol Action Plan includes a reporting framework to the Scottish Executive and it is supported by local performance monitoring, in turn reported to HDAAT quarterly.

1.7 Budgets

The announcement of financial allocations to Action Teams in Scotland was made in February 2000. This allowed for a considerable period of consultation, across Highland, involving a wide range of local and pan-Highland representatives with agreement on the detail of spend agreed at the January 2001 meeting of the Action Team. The resources held by Social Work Services and NHS Highland were pooled with monies available to support Youth Justice initiatives to enable the creation of a Youth Action Services and significant expansion of Adult Services for people with alcohol and/or drug problems. Youth Action Teams, comprising Substance Misuse, Youth Justice and Family support workers are being established in Wick, Inverness, Alness and Fort William. Working with additional specialist practitioners (Community Psychiatric Nurses and Dual Diagnosis Workers) along with existing substance misuse practitioners (GPs, Pharmacists, Social Workers, CPNs and the Voluntary Sector), it is intended that the development of Youth Action Teams will result in more accessible, diverse and equitable services closer to where people live.

(A budget breakdown will form part of the presentation – please refer to Appendix 1 of the report)
1.8 Initiatives in Lochaber

NHS service provision in Lochaber is detailed in a paper written in August 2002. A series of meetings have occurred in Lochaber in the course of this year and a paper summarising issues raised and outlining options for ways forward has been produced. These options include the development of a Youth Action Team, continued involvement by The BLAST Drug Project and potential for linking with services in Argyll and Clyde.

There are a number of pan-Highland initiatives, linked to the Youth Action/Adult Services which will be rolled out to areas as opportunity and funding allow. These include, Mentoring, Positive Options Programmes, Substance Misuse Referral, intensive supervision for young people, family support development and Young Carers support. In addition, Lochaber is one of three priority areas where ‘Moving On’ programmes are being developed. This requires expanding, making accessible and sustainable education, training and employment opportunities for people with drug misuse problems. This work will be led by the Lochaber Drug and Alcohol Forum and supported by a Substance Misuse Development Officer and HDAAT. It is anticipated that a submission will be made to the New Opportunities Fund to release monies allocated for the purpose. This development will occur in conjunction with the establishment of Progress 2 Work programmes centred on Fort William, Inverness and Alness in order to apply multiplier effects wherever possible.

A great deal is already happening in Lochaber and it is hoped that the application of functions/posts/initiatives, described above, will significantly enhance the capacity to respond to individual’s needs, not just in Lochaber, but, across Highland.

1.9 Future Plans

The HDAAT have identified a number of key challenges which it is determined to address in coming years. These include:

♦ Access to treatment and, in particular, specialist services
♦ Engaging Communities
♦ Developing the Alcohol Action Plan
♦ Outreach Specialist Services
♦ Communication
♦ Homelessness issues
♦ Secure additional, well targeted, funding

RECOMMENDATION

Elected members are invited to comment on and endorse the future plans of the Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Team.

Director of Education, Culture and Sport

2 October 2002