

NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services; CIO4: Improving Partnership Working To Deliver 'One City'.**

**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 In February 2008 the Government launched the new ten year national drug strategy entitled 'Drugs: Protecting families and communities'. As part of the delivery of the strategy it seeks to ensure action to tackle drug misuse is at the core of national, regional and local planning and the delivery processes of all departments and agencies that have a role to play in delivering the drug strategy.
- 1.2 Locally, the Safer Sunderland Partnership has included "reducing drug misuse and the harm it causes, including drug related crime" within its strategic priorities for 2009/10.
- 1.3 This purpose of this report is to:
- (a) Provide the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee with an overview of Drugs: Protecting families and communities
  - (b) Provide an overview of progress against all four priority areas contained within the strategy
  - (b) Seek support to continue with all work plans as detailed in the report

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Drugs: Protecting families and communities 2008 replaces and builds on the previous ten year strategy, Drugs: Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain which was published in 1998 and updated in 2002. This new strategy sets out an overarching framework of objectives which extends the approach taken in the previous strategy and contains the first of a series of three year action plans, which will run alongside the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review cycles and associated Public Service Agreement targets.
- 2.2 Many of the aims set out in the original strategy were achieved and these include:
- Use of illicit drugs and frequent use amongst young people has fallen
  - Use of Class A drugs has stabilised after a period of sustained increases
  - Treatment capacity has doubled and waiting times are times down
  - There has been a growing number of offenders pushed into treatment from the criminal justice system
  - Drug-related crime has fallen by around a fifth
- 2.3 Included within the new strategy are four central themes which each have specific actions which are:
- Protecting communities through robust enforcement action to tackle drug supply, drug related crime and ASB and key actions include;**
- Proactively targeting and managing drug using offenders
  - Using neighbourhood policing approach to engage and empower communities
  - Ensuring all available powers, sanctions and levers are applied to tackle drug related crime and anti-social behaviour

- Seizing dealers' assets on arrest and increasing ability to seize assets overseas
- Intercepting more drugs being trafficked

**Preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by substance misuse and key actions include;**

- A new package of care for families
- Mainstreaming prevention
- Improving the treatment system for young people

**Delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social reintegration and key actions include;**

- Developing pilots to test new approaches which can provide better end-to-end management of problem drug users through the system, including more effective use of pooled funding and individual budgets and a sharper focus on outcomes
- Developing a package of support to help drug users to access and complete treatment and to re-integrate into society
- Using opportunities presented by the benefits system to support and create incentives to move towards treatment, training and employment
- Ensuring treatment is personalised and outcome-focused, making full use of new treatment approaches that are shown to be effective
- Draw on significant new funding to support research into developing better forms of treatment.

**Public information campaigns, communications and community engagement and key actions include**

- Extending the use of FRANK to provide access to support and interventions, to support local campaigns and school based education and to target key audiences
- Improving support and information for parents
- Developing better community based communication to build community confidence and engagement in the work that is being done to tackle drug misuse.

2.4 Alongside this national drug strategy there is significant investment to support the delivery of the actions, particularly in relation to the theme delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social reintegration. Within Sunderland we receive approximately £2.75 million for young people and adult drug treatment from the Department of Health and the National Treatment Agency (a Strategic Health Authority, who retain a performance management function for drug treatment performance). There is also approximately £800,000 investment specifically to tackle drug related offending. In addition a number of partner agencies invest their resources, including dedicated staff, to tackle the use and supply of drugs and the impact they have on individuals, families and communities. Locally this includes Sunderland City Council, Northumbria Police, Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust and many others from the voluntary, private and public sector. It is acknowledged that for every £1 invested in drug treatment there is a minimum cost saving of £9.50 for health and criminal justice services.

### **3.0 Current position**

3.1 The Safer Sunderland Partnership has a range of delivery groups which lead on various elements of the implementation of the drugs strategy. The Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager helps ensure that the work in all four areas of the drug strategy is coordinated. Some of the recent and current work being undertaken against each of the four elements is detailed below.

### **3.2 Protecting communities through robust enforcement action to tackle drug supply, drug related crime and ASB:**

- The Sunderland Area Command of Northumbria Police has dedicated lots of their time and resources to challenge the availability and supply of illicit substances.

They recently received recognition of their good work at a national award ceremony. The Police have worked closely with the Safer Sunderland Partnership to improve information sharing about drug use and trends and work in partnership before and after a drugs raid. The Partnership has also produced numerous leaflets which the Police distribute to local communities after drug operations to reassure them, to encourage future reporting of illegal behaviour and to promote access to treatment for drug users and support for their families.

- The Safer Sunderland Partnership has been working closely with the Police and Registered Social Landlords to alert the latter to the risk of their premises being used as cannabis farms. Information leaflets have been circulated to landlords across Sunderland to let them know of tell-tale signs of a cannabis farm and the impact for them as landlords if their premises are used as one. The Police continue to act on intelligence relating to cannabis farms and between June 2008 and June 2009 closed numerous farms across the City (and continue to do so).
- Sunderland is an intensive Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) area. This ensures that all individuals who are arrested on drug related offences, including possession and supply of drugs and / or acquisitive crimes (such as burglary, theft, shoplifting, etc) are drug tested by the Police and if they test positive must be assessed for drug treatment. Drug treatment is now available at all stages of an offender's criminal justice journey, including at arrest, court, prison and on release. Offenders can also be given community sentences which require them to address their offending and drug related behaviour.
- Much drug related anti-social behaviour relates to people using secluded public areas as 'drug dens'. Any dens identified are discussed at the relevant Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) Group and partners proactively work with the drug users, remove rubbish and ensuring the area is cleared and unable to be used again for a similar purpose. The Drug Related Litter Group of the Safer Sunderland Partnership has also developed numerous leaflets and posters for areas where drug related litter, including needles and syringes, are found encouraging local communities to report these incidents and how to be safe if they find any equipment. The City now has approximately 15 pharmacies who offer a needle exchange facility which increases the safe use and return of injecting equipment and numbers of drug related litter finds remain low.

### **3.3 Preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by substance misuse**

- The Risk and Resilience Group report to both the Children's Trust Board and SSP Board. Their work includes addressing children and young people's risky behaviour, including drug and alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy, sexual health and smoking. This group has a comprehensive delivery plan and work with young people on all of these issues.
- The Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) works with young people who use drugs and alcohol across the City. In the last 12 months the service has seen a marked increase in the number of young people who successfully engage and stay with their service.
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership has helped support and develop two new carer support services for those affected by drug use. There is now over 150 carers in contact with these services and they receive one to one and group support, as well as information on the effects of drugs on their loved ones and where they can receive support in their local communities.
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership is currently piloting an initiative bringing together adult drug treatment providers and a range of staff from Children's Centres to work with families affected by substance misuse. It is hoped that this will identify and support children at risk and work with drug users to challenge their behaviour.

### **3.4 Delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social reintegration and key actions**

- The Safer Sunderland Partnership has increased access to drug treatment over the recent years and now individuals are able to access treatment within guidelines from the NTA and stay in treatment as long as necessary to meet their needs
- The Partnership is currently completing a thorough needs assessment on the drug using population in Sunderland and intends to design its services according to need
- Job Centre Plus are now identifying problematic drug users who are seeking employment and referring them to drug treatment. Likewise drug treatment providers are identifying service users seeking employment or training opportunities and referring them in to the range of services available within the Job Centre
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership has developed a comprehensive approach to the housing of drug users and now has a dedicated worker based in the Housing Options Team to work with homeless drug users to enable them to access safe accommodation so that they are then able to address their drug use.

### 3.5 **Public information campaigns, communications and community engagement**

- Sunderland is a pilot area for the new stage of FRANK, a national service available for drug users and their carers to alert them to the effects of drugs and to refer them to services in their own area.
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership produces a range of information leaflets based on the 'you said.... we have... the result is.' format to reassure communities of the activities the Partnership has taken to address drug use and supply. An example of the leaflets we have produced is attached as appendix 1. As mentioned previously the Partnership has also worked with registered social landlords to alert them to the dangers of their premises being used as cannabis farms and an example of the leaflet used is attached as appendix 2
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership has 20 flat screen televisions in public areas across the city, including the Bunny Hill Centre, Wilkinson's Café in the City Centre, the Post Office in Pennywell and Sunderland Accident and Emergency Department. On the screens there are a range of messages including access to treatment services, FRANK and the safe consumption of alcohol.
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership is currently completing a comprehensive assessment of all of its partners' engagement mechanisms with local communities, including how they consult with communities regarding their concerns on drugs and alcohol.

## 4.0 **Performance Framework**

- 4.1 Performance of drug targets is monitored at the Safer Sunderland Partnership's Business Support Group which meets on a bi-monthly basis. In June 2009, a specific performance clinic was held by the Safer Sunderland Partnership to look at drug performance.
- 4.2 Included within the Local Area Agreement, the Safer Sunderland Partnership has responsibility for the performance monitoring and management of the following national indicators;
- NI 30 Prolific and Priority Offenders
  - NI 38 reducing drug (Class A) related offending

An overview on performance against these targets will be provided at the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.3 The Safer Sunderland Partnership is also monitored against a range of performance measures by the National Treatment Agency in relation to drug treatment. Some of these indicators include numbers of drug users in effective treatment, waiting times to get into treatment, planned discharges from treatment and care planning targets throughout an individual's treatment journey. At present there is particular concern

about the Safer Sunderland Partnership's performance in relation to numbers in effective treatment. The target for 2008/09 was 905 numbers of problematic drug users in treatment and the Safer Sunderland Partnership achieved 812. It is highly unlikely given current performance to date this financial year that the Partnership will achieve its targets in this area this year.

## **5.0 Current challenges**

- 5.1 As the Safer Sunderland Partnership did not achieve its target for number of problematic drug users in effective treatment this year they received a 3% reduction in the budget for adult drug treatment. It is likely that there will be a further cut to this budget next year given current performance. It is also believed that the drug treatment system is not as efficient as it could be. Therefore the Partnership Board has provided the authority to the relevant lead officer and group to redesign the treatment system. This is an ongoing procedure and it is likely that any changes to the system will not take effect for several months and it will be next financial year before increases in numbers in treatment are seen.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- a) Receive this report and the overview of the national drug strategy and the work that is ongoing to implement it in Sunderland.
  - b) Consider and make any formal recommendations regarding how the Safer Sunderland Partnership may progress their work to implement this strategy.