

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR-11-05 (p.10) Annex

Substance Misuse Policy Review – Phase 2

During the meeting of the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 23 June 2005, Committee Members agreed to focus on the following two areas for the second phase of their substance misuse policy review, both of which emerged as areas of particular interest during the first stage of the review:

- Barriers which prevent or deter people from accessing substance misuse services
- GP and primary care nurse involvement in delivering, and referring people to, substance misuse treatment services

1. Barriers which prevent or deter people from accessing substance misuse services

Key issues emerging from evidence gathered in the first phase of the policy review

- There is variation in the provision and accessibility of treatment services across Wales.
- People who live in valley and rural communities, particularly those that aren't well served by public transport services, find it more difficult to access the range of treatment services.
- Several substance misuse treatment services are not accessible to people with mobility problems
- Some groups of people, such as those from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and women may be under-represented amongst the people accessing treatment services
- In some areas former offenders may find it particularly difficult to access residential rehabilitation treatment services.
- It is not clear whether current service provision adequately meets the needs of older people and children.

A number of service providers and commissioners have attempted to address the issue of inequality in terms of provision and accessibility. For example:

- The North Wales Harm Reduction Team operate from a camper van in order to provide a service to hard to reach groups such as homeless people and those who misuse sports performance enhancement drugs
- Bridgend CDAT are currently exploring ways of utilising existing service locations such as GP surgeries and Community Mental Health Team premises in order to increase the accessibility of substance misuse services to people who live in valley communities
- The North Wales Specialist Midwifery Liaison Service aims to improve the accessibility and appropriateness of maternity services for substance using women and their families.

Recommendations 17 - 22 of the draft interim report deal with issues of unequal access to substance misuse treatment services.

Aims of this phase of the review

During the second phase of the policy review, the Committee will wish to:

- examine the impact of personal factors such as sex, age, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, the main drug a person misuses, and whether a person is in a relationship where domestic abuse is a factor on people's ability and motivation to access treatment services;
- identify the impact of geographical location on people's ability and motivation to access treatment services;
- examine the extent to which previous offending behaviour is a barrier to, or facilitates access to different types of treatment;
- identify the extent to which commissioners and treatment providers currently address barriers which prevent people from accessing services; and
- highlight examples of good practice in increasing the accessibility of services.

Methodology

- Members' Research Service to undertake a literature review of current evidence base regarding barriers to accessing treatment services
- Members' Research and Committee Service team to conduct a survey of service providers and commissioners in order to gather further information about barriers and to identify examples of organisations who are demonstrating good practice.

- Committee Service to schedule meetings for Committee to receive evidence
- Members to visit organisations to gather more detailed information with a view to exploring the possibility of replicating these practices in other areas.

2. GP involvement in delivering substance misuse treatment / Shared care schemes

Key issues emerging from evidence gathered in the first phase of the policy review

- GP shared care schemes are an integral component of substance misuse treatment provision in Wales.
- The coverage of GP shared care schemes in Wales is variable.
- Some service providers were concerned that the introduction of the General Medical Services (GMS) GP contract in April 2004 has resulted in a decrease in the number of GPs willing to provide substance misuse treatment services, such as those involved in the Merthyr Home Detoxification Service.
- Some GPs are exploring the possibility of operating dedicated substance misuse clinics.
- GPs also act as ‘gatekeepers’ to other treatment services in their role as referrers. In some cases, GPs may be acting as a barrier to people wishing to access treatment services.
- Specialist nurses can play a central role in the provision of shared care services, as with the nurse led alcohol clinics which operate in Powys

Recommendations 10 and 12 of the draft interim report deal with issue of GP involvement in substance misuse treatment. Recommendation 11 deals with the development of advanced and specialist nursing roles in secondary care settings. Members may wish to extend this recommendation to cover nurses in primary care settings.

Aims of this phase of the review

During the second phase of the policy review, the Committee will:

- Map the coverage of GP substance misuse treatment provision (including shared care schemes) in Wales;

- Assess the impact of the GMS GP contract on the provision of GP services;
- Examine and evaluate the role of GPs as gatekeepers to other treatment services.
- Explore the current and potential role of nurses in shared care schemes (including assessment and prescribing treatments).
- Identify examples of effective practice in GP shared care schemes.

Methodology

- Members' Research Service to undertake a literature review of current evidence base on the role of GPs and primary care nurses in providing and enabling access to substance misuse treatment.
- Members' Research and Committee Service team to conduct a survey of service providers and commissioners in order to gather further information and identify examples of good practice
- Committee Service to schedule meetings for Committee to receive evidence
- Members to visit organisations to gather more detailed information with a view to exploring the possibility of replicating these practices in other areas.