

NCB Member Briefing

Drugs: protecting families and communities – the 2008 drug strategy (first edition)

HM Government

<http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/drug-strategy-2008-2018?view=Binary> [PDF 1MB]

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1. Introduction

The new ten-year drugs strategy provides a brief overview of the impact of the 1998 drug strategy¹ and 2002 update², and sets out the government's future approach to preventing drug misuse, treating substance misusers and tackling drug-related crime. Since the publication of the 1998 strategy there have been reductions in drug-related harm and crime, and an increase in the provision of treatment. However, challenges remain: there are an estimated 332,000 problem drug users in England; 24 per cent of young people age 16-24 - and 17 per cent of 11-15 year-olds - used an illegal drug in the last year. The Government's public consultation, launched in July 2007³, identified key priorities including: action to support the children of drug misusers; interventions for families at risk of harm; targeted interventions for vulnerable young people; local information and prevention campaigns; and more personalised treatment.

The strategy emphasises the government's focus on families and communities, and sets out four key areas for action: preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drug misuse; strengthening public information campaigns, communications and community engagement; creating new approaches to drug treatment and social re-integration; and ensuring a robust enforcement to tackle drug supply, drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour. The paper's appendices cover: delivery mechanisms; the legislative framework; diversity and equality; workforce issues; the evidence review; links to other strategies; national governance; impact assessment; and resources.

This briefing summarises the key announcements, focusing in particular on those relating to children, young people and families. In addition to the activity set out below, over the course of the strategy a cross-government programme of research and pilot projects will be carried out to strengthen Government's knowledge of how to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

2. Preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drugs misuse (pages 21-26)

This chapter highlights the impact on children and young people of drug misuse by themselves and their parents. Drug misuse on the part of the young person can lead to: low educational attainment, truancy and school exclusion; engagement in criminal activity and anti-social behavior (ASB); and greater levels of ill-health and risk taking. Drug misuse by a parent can lead to specific harms for the child, such as: abuse or neglect, behavioural and developmental problems; exposure to health harms such as accidental overdose; separation from parents, for example where a child is taken into care; responsibility for caring for a parent; and - in the case of alcohol misuse - a greater risk of experiencing domestic violence. The paper states that the government's 1998 strategy has been effective in reducing young people's drug misuse and helping services

to identify those at greatest risk of developing substance misuse problems in order to deliver early interventions. However, two key messages arising from the consultation process in the development of the new strategy were: parents want better support to educate their children about drugs and take action if their child starts to take drugs; and young people want places to go and things to do to divert them from starting to use drugs. The new strategy emphasises a 'whole family' approach and targeted support for vulnerable young people through all services with effective specialist services for those who develop drug-related problems.

To **help families improve young people's resilience**, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will:

- Provide better information for parents and carers to help them in preventing young people's substance misuse
- Involve families in the treatment of young people and other family members where appropriate
- Develop additional support for families at risk of drug-related problems, drawing on learning from pilot programmes

To **address the impact of parental substance misuse**, Government will:

- Ensure prompt access to treatment for drug-misusing parents, with assessments taking account of the whole family's needs
- Encourage the provision of more 'family-friendly' drug treatment services
- Deliver a package of interventions to provide intensive, integrated support to families at risk. This is to improve parenting skills; reduce risk factors for children; support families to stay together and reduce the inter-generational transmission of problems – this will draw on programmes including Family Intervention Projects, Family Drug and Alcohol Courts and Family Pathfinders
- Provide improved information and support to kin carers, such as grandparents, who take responsibility for the children of substance-misusing parents
- Use early identification and improved information sharing between children's and adults' services, to prioritise the protection of children of substance-misusing parents
- Improve access to additional support services – for example, housing, employment and education support – for parents undergoing drug treatment
- Improve links between maternity and treatment services to address prenatal harms

To strengthen the **role of mainstream services in preventing substance misuse**, Government will:

- As set out in the Children's Plan⁴, review schools' delivery of substance misuse education and identification of young people at risk
- Support directors of Children's Services in their delivery of prevention activity in the context of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 14 (increasing the number of children and young people on the path to success)
- Ensure the application of the National Service Framework standards for children, young people and maternity services and relevant clinical guidance by health service providers to families affected by substance misuse
- Promote earlier intervention through mainstream services such as schools and youth services before substance misuse problems develop
- Improve integrated services for vulnerable young people with joined-up approaches to related issues, such as youth crime; teenage pregnancy; and disengagement in education, employment or training. This will be supported by improved links with the development of the children's workforce
- Police drug supply and carry out enforcement activity on underage sales of cigarettes, alcohol and volatile substances

- Improve access to social inclusion programmes, as set out in the ten-year strategy for young people⁵
- Promote activity through which young people feel like, and are seen to be, members of the community.

To **improve the treatment system for young people**, DCSF will work with the National Treatment Agency to:

- Develop the workforce, improve access and develop a more outcome-based approach
- Improve transitional arrangements for young people transferring to adult services
- Improve links between young people's drug treatment and mental health services
- Create a smooth transition from secure estate to community-based services, including support to aid resettlement drawing on the Resettlement Aftercare Provision (RAP) projects
- Involve young people and parents/carers more in the planning and process of treatment for young people
- Encourage the establishment of carers' and users' groups in areas where they do not exist and involve them in the design and planning of treatment services

Government plans to carry out a review of the key gaps in the evidence base relating to factors that affect, and the impact of, young people's substance misuse and the effectiveness of services. This will inform the cross-government research programme.

Relevant PSA targets are: proportion of young people frequently using illicit drugs, alcohol or volatile substances (PSA14) and number of drug users in effective treatment (PSA 25). National indicators relating to this section are: young people's participation in positive activities (NI110); first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (NI111); rate of permanent exclusions from school (NI114); substance misuse by young people (NI115); and 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs) (NI117).

3. Public information campaigns, communications and community engagement (pages 33-36)

DCSF, the Home Office (HO) and the Department of Health (DH) will lead on the delivery of **communications campaigns aimed at young people and families**. Key actions include:

- Develop a partnership of young people's and parents' organisations to engage and communicate with parents, to identify further information and support needed and recommend ways in which families and parents can help tackle drug misuse
- Target parents – in particular those with children at risk of engaging in drug misuse – with facts about drugs and drug misuse, and explore the feasibility of combining these messages with those relating to a range of issues
- Provide support and encouragement for local partnerships to run local drug awareness campaigns, where appropriate linked to FRANK to which the Government affirms its commitment
- Commission strategic research with young people and stakeholders to develop an evidence base for an alcohol-related campaign for under-18s
- Develop FRANK to complement wider drug education objectives, following the drug education review
- Deliver through FRANK a portal for young people to access drug treatment and targeted support, including an online programme for cannabis users

The HO and its partner agencies will lead on ensuring **effective communications with communities**. Actions include:

- Develop communications for communities affected by drug-related crime, to ensure they know how to report it and understand what action will be taken to address it
- Work with local agencies and partnerships to reduce the percentage of the public who perceive drug use and dealing to be a problem in their area – including championing the rollout of local campaigns, such as ‘Rat on a Rat’
- Use National Tackling Drugs Week and the Tackling Drugs, Changing Lives Awards to raise awareness within communities of the work done locally to make their communities drug-free
- Make the public aware that assets seized from drug traffickers will be invested in the community
- Share positive outcomes achieved by drug misusers to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions and the role of the community in supporting positive outcomes
- A consultation (led by the Department for Transport) to gather views on how to make police enforcement for driving under the influence of drugs more effective

PSA targets relevant to this section include: proportion of young people frequently using illicit drugs, alcohol or volatile substances (PSA 14); and percentage of the public who perceive drug use or dealing to be a problem in their area (PSA 25).

4. Delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social re-integration (pages 27-32)

This chapter announces measures to provide more personalised approaches to delivering treatment. While continuing to prioritise heroin and crack use, the DH will **target under-represented groups and those with complex needs** by: addressing unmet needs and barriers to treatment – including for young people, black and ethnic or other minority communities, sex workers and parents with dependent children; and developing targeted services for those with complex needs, such as drug users with mental health problems.

The Government will seek to **improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment** by: improving treatment retention levels; introducing new local clinical governance arrangements and monitoring treatment outcomes to raise standards; improving information sharing between agencies where appropriate; continuing to promote harm minimisation measures such as needle exchange and drug-assisted treatments; improving commissioning skills; and engaging service users in local service planning and delivery.

A range of new treatment approaches will be promoted by: using contingency management pilots – which employ positive reinforcement techniques – to identify good practice and address concerns around the use of rewards; encouraging the wider use of mutual aid support networks; increasing understanding through research on addiction and new forms of prevention or treatment – addiction will be one of the joint priority areas for health research funding, led by the Medical Research Council; and applying understanding about what works developed through the routine monitoring of treatment outcomes.

The strategy also announces **a focus on services to help drug misusers re-integrate into society**, linked to frameworks set out in the social exclusion action plan⁶ and the Cabinet Office’s Families at Risk Review. DH, the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Communities and Local Government will lead on activity to: encourage joint working between treatment agencies, Jobcentres and housing advocacy

and advice providers; encourage local authorities to work with partners to meet locally-identified needs for housing and support for those affected by drug misuse; allow the Pooled Treatment Budget to be used alongside other funding streams to provide advice on re-integration support and case management; raise awareness among local partners of the need to assess drug misusers' wider needs; and pilot projects to explore the use of pooled budgets, end-to-end case management and individual budgets. In relation to the **benefits system**, the Government will: require drug misusers on out-of-work benefits to meet with a specialist treatment provider as part of the Jobseeker Direction or Work Focused Interview requirements; encourage closer links between relevant agencies to ensure referrals of drug misusers to specialist services; and explore the potential of requiring a client to engage with drug treatment in return for benefit payments.

This chapter's relevant PSA target is the number of drug users in effective treatment (PSA 25 and NI40). Relevant national indicators include: all-age all-cause mortality rate (NI20); number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI41); and working-age people on out-of-work benefits (NI152).

5. Protecting communities through robust enforcements to tackle drug supply, drug-related crime and anti-social behaviours (pages 14-20)

This chapter sets out action the Government proposes to take to tackle the supply of drugs from overseas and address drug-related offending. To **proactively target and manage drug-misusing offenders**, the HO, Ministry of Justice (MoJ), police and other partners will ensure the effective application at a local level of Drug Interventions Programme (DIP)-based powers like drug testing and restriction on bail, and will keep such powers under review to respond to emerging new drugs. To increase the number and range of offenders brought within these arrangements, Government will: support the expansion of the range of DIP interventions; increase the number of offenders subject to DIP conditional cautions; and improve the management of offenders through continuity of case management and strengthened links between prisons, local Criminal Justice Integrated Teams and probation services.

To **maximise the effectiveness of prison and community sentences**, action to be taken by the MoJ, working with DH and other partners, includes: maximising the use of community sentences with Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs); ensuring access for all prisoners to a minimum standard of clinical drug treatment; commissioning and delivery pilots to explore the scope for streamlining funding and commissioning arrangements for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Primary Care Trusts and Joint Commissioning Groups; and exploring the use of additional community-based options for substance misusers as an alternative to custody; and extending the Dedicated Drug Court pilots.

Actions to **engage and empower communities with stronger, locally-responsive law enforcement** include: greater use of post-conviction Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs); new powers to seize high-value goods at the time of arrest where it is expected that a confiscation process will be commenced; widening those assets that are liable for civil recovery and extending time limits for recovery to take place; and introducing a new principle of sentencing that all criminal gains should be removed.

The strategy also includes actions to **reduce the supply of drugs into and within the country**, including: the strengthening of international partnerships to intercept the trafficking of drugs into the UK and border controls in countries of departure; and maintaining strong UK border controls.

Relevant PSA targets are: rate of drug-related offending and percentage of the public who perceive drug use or dealing to be a problem in their area (both PSA 25). Relevant national indicators include: perceptions of ASB (NI17); dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime by the local council and policy (NI21); re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders (NI30); and drug-related (Class A) offending rate (NI38).

6. Delivery and resources (Appendices 1 and 9)

The strategy will be delivered through a series of three-year Action Plans, which will align with the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review cycles and PSAs. It will therefore underpin the delivery against two of the new PSA targets for 2008-11 – reducing the harm caused by alcohol and drugs (Home Office/Department of Health PSA 25⁷) and increasing the number of children and young people on the path to success (Department for Children, Schools and Families, PSA 14⁸) – and the relevant national indicators. As well as those departments responsible for delivering against the PSAs, there will be a significant role for other government departments and national agencies, such as the Ministry of Justice, Department for Work and Pensions, the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the National Treatment Agency. Regionally, Government Offices will: ensure all relevant partners are involved in the Local Area Agreement (LAAs) negotiations⁹; identify and share good practice; and work with regional partners – such as Regional Offender Managers, Youth Justice Board and Strategic Health Authorities – to support delivery. At the local level, Local Strategic Partnerships will have overarching responsibility for delivery of the strategy through the development of Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs. In addition, the National Audit Office will be evaluating the effectiveness of local Drug Action Teams and identify improvements that could be made.

Estimated resources for 2008/9 to 2010/11 are set out in Appendix 9 and include:

- £568.22 million for Department of Health and other mainstream treatment
- £55.1 million each year for young people drug-specific services funding for local delivery (DH, DCSF, Youth Justice Board and Home Office funding)
- £31.61 million each year for Young People central programmes (DH, DCSF, Youth Justice Board and Home Office funding)

The Pooled Treatment Budget for 2009-11 will be confirmed in July 2008.

7. Devolved powers

Elements of the strategy relating to health, education, housing and social care relate to England only; aspects relating to policing and the criminal justice system, including offender management, cover England and Wales; actions carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions apply to England, Wales and Scotland; and measures relating to drug supply are UK-wide.

Zoë Renton
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¹ HM Government (1998) *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain - The Government's Ten-Year Strategy for Tackling Drugs Misuse* <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm39/3945/3945.htm>

² HM Government (2002) *Updated Drug Strategy 2002* <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/updated-drug-strategy-2002.pdf?view=Standard&pubID=191758>

³ HM Government (2007) *Drugs: our community, your say – a consultation paper* <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/drug-strategy-consultation.pdf>

⁴ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *The Children's Plan: building brighter futures* <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/> (see paragraph 6.49)

⁵ HM Treasury/Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) Aiming high for young people:

a ten year strategy for positive activities http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/2/6/cyp_tenyearstrategy_260707.pdf [PDF 769KB]

⁶ HM Government (2006) Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications/reaching_out/reaching_out.aspx

⁷ HM Government (2007) *PSA Delivery Agreement 25: Reduce the harm caused by Alcohol and Drugs* http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A/4/pbr_csr07_psa25.pdf [PDF 318KB]

⁸ HM Government (2007) *PSA Delivery Agreement 14: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success* http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/4/8/pbr_csr07_psa14.pdf [PDF 355KB]

⁹ LAAs set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. For further information go to www.communities.gov.uk