

This brief has been put together to highlight the key messages contained in the Drugs Strategy and the response of the National Healthy Schools Programme.

The full executive summary of this report can be found at:

<http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drug-strategy/overview/>

Background

The government has produced a ten-year Drugs Strategy that aims to restrict the supply of illegal drugs and reduce the demand for them. It also focuses on protecting families and strengthening communities. There are four main strands of work within the strategy:

- Protecting communities through tackling drug supply, drug related crime and anti-social behaviour
- Preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drug misuse
- Delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social re-integration
- Public information campaigns, communications and community engagement

A summary of the actions linked to the most relevant two sections is contained below

1. Preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drug misuse

- Ensure prompt access to treatment for all drug misusing parents with a treatment need; and with parents who are problem drug users, and whose children are at risk, having rapid access to treatment
- Early intervention targeting those most likely to develop substance misuse problems, based on predictive factors and routine screening and assessment, taking a 'whole family' approach
- Recognition of the important role provided by 'kin-carers' such as grandparents, who may take on the caring responsibilities for the children of substance misusing parents
- Drug and alcohol education programmes delivered by teachers trained to use normative, life-skills based approaches, supported by wider communications campaigns and by parental and community involvement
- Reducing absenteeism, developing school-based social work programmes and inclusive school policies to maintain engagement with young people who are most at risk

- Parents wanted better support to educate their children about drugs and they also wanted to know what action to take if their children were involved in substance misuse
- Young people wanted access to more positive activities

Note: In terms of mainstreaming prevention, the strategy mentions 'The completion of the review of substance misuse education, committed to in the Children's Plan to strengthen the role of schools with an emphasis on primary education, early identification and provision of in-school support'. This has the following expected outcomes: 'Improved education rating with Ofsted' and 'achievement of National Healthy School Status'.

2. Public information campaigns, communications and community engagement

A range of campaigns will be used to engage young people with substance misuse messages, building on evidence of what works in communications, including further development of the FRANK campaign in order to:

- Deliver information on the most commonly used drugs
- Develop evidence for campaigns targeting under-18s about alcohol
- Support stakeholders to deliver local information and prevention campaigns

The Drugs Strategy & National Healthy Schools Programme

The National Healthy Schools Programme guidance [Engaging parents and carers – guidance for schools] provides a range of strategies and support for schools wishing to engage with parents and carers to support their drugs education. This guidance will be available as a pdf download from the NHSP website from mid-March 2008, and will be available in hard copy format in the summer term.

The Programme continues to work closely with a range of key partners including Ofsted, the Drugs Education Forum, QCA and the CPD for PSHE programme, in order to support the Drug Strategy's outcomes as mentioned above. In particular, the Programme supports the ongoing commitment to the training of teachers and other colleagues who deliver drugs education in education settings in the approaches listed above.

The forthcoming NHSP guidance on PSHE [due in autumn 2008] aims to strengthen PSHE, including the delivery of both drugs education and SRE, given some of their common areas.