



PRESS RELEASE

ADAT Scoops Top COSLA Award

Ayrshire and Arran's Drug Death Review Group, part of the Alcohol and Drug Action Team, have won the coveted 'Best Team Award' as part of the prestigious COSLA Excellence Award Scheme 2005.

Members of the Drug Death Review attended a sparkling award dinner in Bishopbriggs, Glasgow along with 400 other invited guests to pick up the award presented by the well known TV news reader Jackie Bird and have since received letters of congratulations from Jack McConnell First Minister.

Detective Superintendent Stephen Heath of Strathclyde Police, who chairs the group spoke about the work of the group after the event. He said: "Ayrshire had seen a dramatic rise in drug deaths and we simply had to take action. We needed radical ideas and ways of stemming the rise. Our first step was to set up the Drug Death Review Group. One death is too many and has a massive impact for families and communities - our aim was to reduce the numbers of people dying and we have achieved this.

"The Scottish Executive set a five year target, from 2000 to 2005, of reducing drugs deaths by 25 per cent. In 2002 there were 29 drug deaths in Ayrshire. However last year the number was down to nine and this year to date (calendar year measurement) there have been four. As a result of the dramatic reduction in deaths, the scheme has been benchmarked by the Executive and replicated throughout Scotland. One Drug Death is however one too many and our overall objective must be not to need a Drug Death Review Group"

Maria McLaren, Addictions Co-ordinator of HMP Kilmarnock, said "One of the first areas we targeted was through-care for prisoners on release from HMP Kilmarnock. We had noted that there were a significant number of recently released prisoners with low tolerance levels returning to drug use in the community and tragically overdosing and we had to do something about it. Through ADAT, NHS Ayrshire & Arran funded a post for an addiction nurse, who now helps the prisoners in HMP Kilmarnock right through to their release - this has had a significant impact."

Dr Charles Lind of NHS Ayrshire & Arran added: "We also targeted fatal and non-fatal overdose training at hostel staff and have worked closely with local GPs on prescribing matters to those at risk. All these actions have helped bring the number of deaths down."

Terry Kane from North Ayrshire Council Team Leader Criminal Justice Services said "As one of the main providers of community support and rehabilitation for people

with drug problems, the examination of support to individuals who have sadly died as a result of their drug use has assisted us to identify where we need to provide additional interventions to help prevent further loss of life.”

Stephen Heath explained his thoughts on the award and how the group's strategy is evolving. He said: "Receiving the award from COSLA shows what can be achieved when different agencies (NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Procurator's Fiscal Office, HMP Kilmarnock, Ayrshire Criminal Justice Social Work Services Partnership, Cranstoun Drug Services and Strathclyde Police) work together.”

Despite the reduction in deaths in Ayrshire the group have no plans to stop here. “In the past we have had by necessity to react to overdoses and deaths as a result of drug use; we are now commissioning research to identify ways to prevent deaths from happening in the first place.”

Notes to the editor

- The Alcohol and Drug Action Team in Ayrshire and Arran is a multi-agency committee which meets six times a year.
- Implementation of tasks are remitted to working groups who report back to ADAT.
- Membership of ADAT includes representation from the three local authorities, Strathclyde Police, Prison Services, Procurator Fiscal office, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Scottish Drugs Forum, Alcohol Focus Scotland and the Chairpersons of the three local Community Addiction Concerns groups.
- The Chairperson of ADAT is Detective Superintendent Stephen Heath Strathclyde Police
- The Vice Chairperson is Louis Skehal, Head of Adult Services, North Ayrshire Council
- ADAT was formed in 1995 as a result of the 1994 publication Report of the Ministerial Drugs Task Force Drugs in Scotland : Meeting The Challenge. The Report expressed the concern that drug misuse is an escalating problem in Scotland, which must be addressed by society as a whole. The response needed to be multi-agency and multi-disciplinary. The reports stated that Drug Action Teams, consisting of a small steering group of senior ‘key players’ who have the capacity to influence agencies, should be set up to lead and co-ordinate local methods to tackle drug misuse. Similar recommendations concerned with the misuse of alcohol were previously outlined in The Scottish Office Document Gen (1989), thus in 1995, it was decided to combine the Alcohol and Drug Planning Committees to establish the Ayrshire and Alcohol Drug Action Team.

The role of ADAT is to co-ordinate strategy in order to reduce the harm rising from alcohol/drug misuse. The guiding principles of ADAT are :

- To raise awareness
- To promote best practice and set standards
- To maximise the use of inter agency resources
- To promote Health and seamless Health/Social Care
- To promote user and carer participation

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