



Notes from meeting of Chairs of Drug Action Teams

Monday 13th, September 2004
St Andrews House, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh

Present:

Ian Ross, (Chair of the Association and previous Chair Highland DAAT) Sandy Cameron (Chair: Lanarkshire ADAT); Alan Baird (Chair: Dundee City DAAT), Tom Wood (incoming Chair: Edinburgh ADAT), Fiona McKenzie (Chair: Forth Valley SAT), Stephen Heath (Chair: Ayrshire & Arran ADAT), David Sullivan (Chair: Aberdeen City JADAT, via video link)

In attendance: Justine Walker, National Officer, Association of Drug Action Teams

Ian Ross thanked those Chairs present for their attendance and explained that the meeting had been convened following communication to all Chairs from Sandy Cameron. The timing of the meeting had been designed to take place in advance of the next Association meeting, and prior to Ian's standing down as Association chairperson. It was agreed that Justine Walker would take a brief note of the meeting, including any agreed outcomes.

Ian Ross explained that there was no fixed agenda for the meeting, rather an opportunity for Chairs present to explore the issues that had been raised in Sandy Cameron's communication. In addition, Ian Ross highlighted that since he was standing down as Association Chairperson, he was keen to ensure that arrangements were in place to ensure a smooth transition of Association office bearer positions. The outcomes of the meeting, including any agreements on next steps, would be tabled for discussion on the 29th September at the full Association meeting.

In introducing the content of the meeting, Ian Ross indicated that he thought it was important to state that the meeting comes against a backdrop of a number of recent developments. These include the Scottish Executive Treatment and Rehabilitation Review; the pending review of Drug and Alcohol Action Teams and wider contextual developments around joint futures; community health partnerships; community planning; and a number of new emerging policy agendas.

Ian Ross then invited Sandy Cameron to speak regarding the letter to Chairs on 3rd August.

Sandy Cameron outlined that as a previous Chair of the Association and as the Chair of Lanarkshire ADAT, he was aware of the difficulties in fully engaging Chairs in Association business. Direct attendance of Chairs at Association meetings had been a long-standing problem. At a time when it is intended to review Action Teams, Sandy Cameron indicated that it was important for Chairs to give some time to consider the issues, in order to be in a position to fully influence the direction on both the review and other key issues, a number of which have already been identified by Ian Ross. Sandy Cameron further emphasised that as collective body, Chairs would be in a much stronger position to positively influence the Scottish Executive [particularly Ministers] on agreed policy opportunities. In writing directly to Chairs, Sandy Cameron indicated that he hoped a constructive dialogue could take place on key policy opportunities, and the best mechanisms for engaging Chairs.

Ian Ross invited Justine Walker to speak regarding the background paper she circulated to Chairs via email on 6th September.

Justine Walker briefly spoke to the tabled paper, which had been prepared in order to provide some further information and wider context to the issues raised by Sandy Cameron. In outlining the key issues for consideration, Justine Walker indicated that it would be particularly useful for those present to consider what mechanisms could be put in place to improve dialogue with Chairs.

Ian Ross invited others present to contribute; a summary of key points discussed is outlined below:

- It was agreed that there was a need for the new incoming Association office bearers to be well supported by both Chairs and Officers.
- It was agreed as both vital and timely that some considered thinking is given to exploring improved ways of engaging Action Team Chairs, to ensure that they are at the forefront of any new policy developments. Without this involvement it was acknowledged that opportunities for engagement on policy development would not be maximised.
- As a collective group, it was acknowledged that Chairs are well placed to look at the future positioning of Action Teams alongside other strategic developments, i.e. Joint Futures, Community Health Partnerships.
- In the case of the review of Drug and Alcohol Action Teams, it was viewed as critical that Action Team Chairs are in a position to fully engage and influence the review process. It was agreed likely that the current arrangements regarding two separate Associations would be considered by any review, and as such it was appropriate for members to consider this issues involved. Broad-based support was given to the need to explore the merits, or otherwise, of having two national Associations when nearly all local teams are joined. It was recognised that future discussions in the medium and long term would need to take place jointly with the SAAAT.
- On the structure of Association meetings, it was considered that there would be merit in looking into the benefits of varying arrangements. One option would be operational type of meetings (similar to the current Association meetings) that would involve both Officers and Chairs. In addition to these operational meetings, less frequent strategic meetings [i.e. twice or three time a year] could

take place. These meetings would focus on higher-level strategic issues and provide a platform for both Chairs and Officers to agree priority policy areas for advancement with the Scottish Executive (and other relevant partners as appropriate). Those present thought that at this strategic level, Chairs would be most willing to engage.

In identifying the next steps to be advanced from the meeting, the following was agreed:

- a) A further meeting of Chairs should be held, to advance some of the initial discussions tabled at this meeting. A possible timeframe of mid/late October was identified; however, recognition was given to the importance of ensuring a convenient date to ensure good attendance.
- b) It was felt paramount that the Association agree both the short and long term issues that need to be addressed over the coming year. It was therefore suggested that this should be an Agenda item for the proposed additional Chairs' meeting.
- c) Chairs should be asked to identify how the structure of Association meetings can be improved to encourage greater participation.