

**MEETING of DRUG OFFICERS
of the ASSOCIATION OF DRUG ACTION TEAMS**

Wednesday 21st September 2005

Abbey Business Centre, 83 Princes Street, Edinburgh

Present:

Mike McCarron [Chair]; Linda Bates [minutes]; Liz Coates; Sharon Flynn; Marie Hayes; Vered Hopkins; Gaynor Jones; Marion Logan; Stevie Lydon; Angus MacKay; Liam McLaughlin; Hazell Morrell; Julie Murray; Catriona Oxley; Jim Parker; Fraser Ross; Ian Smillie; Anni Stonebridge; Tom Wood

In attendance:

Dr. Gordon Hay and Maria Gannon (Centre for Drug Misuse); Paolo Mazzoncini and Christine Thomson (Scottish Executive); Jill Lewis (Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership)

1. Welcome

Mike McCarron welcomed all to the meeting, particularly those guests from the Centre for Drug Misuse, the Scottish Executive, and the Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership.

2. Apologies

Grace Ball; Suzy Calder; Eric Corstorphine; Gordon Coster; Grahame Cronkshaw; Stephen Dalton; Jackie Davies; Chris Denmark; Elaine Fetherston; Caird Forsyth; Brian Gardner; Maggie Jamieson; Rita Keyte; Jenna Leask; Joni McArthur; Elaine McNeil; Hannah Muldoon; Maggie Murray; Leona Paget; Donna Reid; Hilary Smith; Liz Sneddon; Karyn Tait; ; Valerie Tallon; Iain Turnbull; Liam Wells.

3. Estimating the national and local prevalence of problem drug misuse in Scotland

Dr. Gordon Hay of the Centre for Drug Misuse gave a presentation of his study, commissioned by the Scottish Executive for figures in 2003 (slides attached at [Appendix 1](#)). The headline change since the last study was conducted (in 2000) is that the overall national prevalence rate has gone down from 1.96 to 1.84 per hundred of the population, although there have been increases in prevalence in specific geographical areas.

Dr. Hay stated that he had not been requested by the Scottish Executive to provide analysis for the figures obtained by the study; he felt that it would be helpful to have an extended period of feedback to help interpret the results, as the figures on their own hide certain circumstances and issues. Reasons for why prevalence had increased or decreased in certain areas had not been identified, and it was for this reason that Dr. Hay felt that it would not be appropriate to use the data as the singular basis for funding; other issues should also be taken into consideration.

Members agreed that the national study was good in principle, but was not necessarily reflective of circumstances at a local level. It was also agreed that further work could be done (by ISD?) into examining underlying issues affecting the data obtained, as the study raised more questions than it answered.

4. Addictions Throughcare Service – presentation by the Scottish Executive

Paolo Mazzoncini of the Scottish Executive gave a presentation regarding new Throughcare arrangements (attached at [Appendix 2](#)). Paolo stated that the new Throughcare Addiction Service is not about treatment *per se*, it's about making the linkages between the partner agencies to provide appropriate treatment for a given individual.

These new arrangements were based on the work of the tripartite group (comprising the Scottish Executive, Scottish Prison Service, and local authorities) in 2003. A key document, "Throughcare – Developing The Service" was published in January 2003 (available online at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/justice/tcds-00.asp>).

A wide-ranging discussion followed the presentation, covering issues such as the current 'patchwork quilt' of different models currently used to deliver thoroughcare services; concerns about the low prioritisation of services within certain regions; the lack of priority given to single males, and/or those who have served less than 31 days; the short timescale (only 6 weeks post-release) by which time ex-offenders are to be introduced to services; monitoring the success of services; a lack of ongoing information from the Scottish Executive; arrangements for private prisons such as HMP Kilmarnock; and resource implications.

Paolo stated that he would be happy to facilitate contact between partner agencies, local DATs and the Scottish Executive, to further discuss these issues. Mike McCarron suggested that it might be helpful to provide some collective feedback to the Scottish Executive; he shall consult with members from local DATs and forward it to Paolo. **action: MMcC**

It was suggested that Sandy Cameron, as Chair of the DAT Association, should raise with the Justice Department the need for shared decision-making in the distribution of the £2m additional funding (due to be distributed via Criminal Justice), to ensure strategic fit with the planning of services before they are delivered. Marie Hayes shall raise this with Sandy. **action: MH**

5. Inter-DAT Practice Exchange Seminars – possible topics and formats

A general discussion was held about the current national state of drugs policy work; it was felt by many that there is currently a vacuum at the Scottish level, resulting in top-down decision making without the inclusion of either local DATs or the DAT Association. The disbanding of the Effective Interventions Unit (EIU), with little consultation on how this might affect DATS, has also

meant that there is now no specific means of disseminating drugs research information from the Executive. To counteract this, and to provide the DAT Association with a more unified voice on specific issues that might help influence strategy/policy development, Mike McCarron proposed a programme of practice exchange seminars and expert-led information sessions in the course of the next year. Suggestions from members for seminars included:

- the Strategic Environment within which local ADATs work
- Governance of treatment services, and how they are evaluated
- the thinking behind the shift of drugs policy from Health to Criminal Justice, and how this shift will affect service provision
- the evidence base to linking treatment and offending behaviour, and how should that be prioritised

It was **agreed** that such a programme would be desirable, and that Mike should continue with making plans for it. Mike shall email all local DATs to ask for additional suggestions. **action: MMcC**

Members suggested that help with funding for research and evaluation work would be desirable from the Scottish Executive.

With reference to the recent letter from Patricia Scotland at the Scottish Executive (12th September), stating that a national Review of Drug and Alcohol Action Teams has been delayed to allow for an internal 'stock-taking'/scoping exercise to be done first, this internal review shall be carried out by Peter Bates (Chair of NHS Tayside). Mike suggested that it may be beneficial for the DAT Association to write to him before the national Review is undertaken, listing current issues that DATs face, asking what he shall be considering in the Review, etc. Mike shall email local DATs to ask what they would wish to be asked in this letter; suggestions so far include working with parents; aftercare; how drugs and alcohol services can combine if under two different jurisdictions; how future consultations and feedback will be timetabled. **action: MMcC**

6. An Information Officers' Network?

Marie Hayes suggested that as several DATs have Information and Research posts, it might be helpful to convene a sub-group of these Officers to work together on specific issues. There is already an information sub-group within SAAAT, so any future merged Association could continue with this work but include drugs-related issues; it was **agreed** that it would be desirable to also invite representatives from ISD and the Scottish Executive (ideally from both Health and Criminal Justice) to join this sub-group. It was recognised that not all DAT teams have (or are in a position to employ) an Information & Research Officer, and therefore any sub-group would report back to the merged Association as a whole. Mike McCarron shall liaise with Marie Hayes, Barbara O'Donnell (of SAAAT), ISD, and the Health and Criminal Justice Departments of the Scottish Executive to arrange a meeting to move this forward. **action: MMcC**

7. Any Other Business

No other business was tabled.

8. Date of Next Meeting

No date was set for another Drug Officers' meeting, in light of the potential merger with SAAAT. Members shall be advised by Linda Bates of the date for the inaugural merged Associations' meeting (possibly round about Thursday 8th December).

action: LB