

BULLETIN

Winter 2004

THE CHANGING FACE OF LANARKSHIRE ADAT IN 2004

LANARKSHIRE ADAT is to get a new look as part of a major campaign to raise its profile.

As part of an ongoing plan to raise awareness of the ADAT's strategic and policy role and the services it offers, a brand new logo is to be introduced this spring to coincide with the launch of the ADAT's own website in Lanarkshire.

The new logo and stand-alone website approach aims to provide a clear, concise and individual identity for the ADAT.

The website will be launched on April 1 this year following a consultation process which began last year.

The new logo, which features an eye-catching new design in pink and grey, will be used to highlight where information on drugs and alcohol can be found and is to be launched a few weeks later.

The logo will be the focal point for a range of branded signposting that the ADAT plans to have in place at pharmacies, health centres, etc.

The logo will also feature prominently on the new ADAT website.

The website process culminated in four design companies being invited to give a presentation in November 2003 before a panel made up of staff from the ADAT and health promotion, to set up the site.

As a result Edinburgh based company CIVIC Computing, whose previous developments include SHOW, ISD, Know the Score, Scottish Drugs Forum and the new Alcohol Information Scotland site, were selected to set the website up.

The company, who are renowned for their groundbreaking work in relation to accessibility, which will be a key feature of the ADAT site, have been working closely with the ADAT to achieve an easy to navigate and informative site.

The site, which is aimed primarily at employees of the partner agencies and other public sector professionals, will provide information on local statistics, research, services and plans, as well as links to similar national resources.

Details of ADAT subgroup meetings, including members and dates, will also be posted on the site as well as minutes of the main quarterly meetings.

Other potential users who will find the site of interest include families and carers, service-users, and students.

It is envisaged that the site will be made up of six main sections, namely About ADAT, Publications, Services, Events, FAQs and Links.

The **About ADAT** section will provide information on the structure and remit of the ADAT as well as details of recent and forthcoming meetings. Information regarding the Lanarkshire Community Safety Partnership and other local forums will also be found here, as well as news items and press releases.

The **Publications** section of the site will bring together local strategies, action plans, conference information, reports, and research documents. Combined with links to national resources, this will provide unprecedented one-stop access to a wide range of relevant materials. Minutes of the main quarterly ADAT meetings and current and back issues of the ADAT bulletin will also be available here.

The **Services** section will contain three sub-sections. The first of these will link to an updated and searchable on-line version of the 'Connected' directory of local helping agencies, and will also provide further details of drug and alcohol services in Lanarkshire. The second sub-section will provide links to national service directories, and the third will provide details of funding opportunities and training services provided by ADAT partners and external organizations.

The **Events** section will provide details of forthcoming local and national events such as seminars, conferences and training courses relating to alcohol and drug issues. Information regarding other relevant local events such as 'Choices for Life' will also be included.

The site will also feature **Frequently Asked Questions** and **Links** sections, the latter of which will tap into an extensive list of national and international resources relating to drug and alcohol issues.

The new ADAT partnership website, which aims to be the biggest and best in the country, will be available at <http://www.LanADAT.org.uk> from April 1, 2004.

ADAT WELCOMES NICHOLSON REVIEW...BUT SOUNDS NOTE OF CAUTION

THE Nicholson Review on Licensing has come under scrutiny at a full committee meeting of the ADAT.

The ADAT now have a policy discussion at each quarterly meeting and the focus for discussion in November involved talks around the findings of the Nicholson Review.

The key issues to come out of the meeting were that whilst it is important to focus on young people - their drinking cannot be seen in isolation from other areas of the community.

In general the ADAT broadly welcomed the themes of the review that are set out on the next page and can also be viewed in more detail on the NHS Lanarkshire website, but some concerns were raised around opting out rather than opting in to provide services for young people and the need to ensure clear links are established around community safety and health agendas.

Other items on the agenda included a visit by Colin Cook, head of the Substance Misuse division at the Scottish Executive, to give feedback on the Corporate Action Plan.

There was also a presentation from the ADAT on progress over the past three years which can be viewed on the ADAT pages of the NHS Lanarkshire website. Insert address

The key issues raised by the Scottish Executive included waiting times for services, development of access to prescribing and rehab services.

- Lanarkshire is one of six areas that has been successful in its bid for monies under the Arrest Referral Programme and has been awarded £128,000 over the next two years with SACRO being the provider.
- The ADAT is currently reviewing the progress and impact of the substance misuse liaison nurses and a report with the outcomes of the pilot scheme will be available at the next meeting.
- Two new dual diagnosis nursing posts have now also been filled.
- In relation to Drug Treatment and Testing Orders a new team has been established at High Patrick Street in Hamilton led by Santosh Dade and the project is well underway.

- Work is progressing on the three-year strategy in relation to the structure of the membership and priorities of the ADAT and a draft document will be ready by April this year.
- The training group are working closely with STRADA and other agencies in relation to the delivery and commissioning of training and the three key areas that will form the 2004-07 strategy are Getting Our Priorities Right, Assessment and Care Management and Skills based Interventions.
- The Association Conference took part at the end of October and there will be continued discussion over priority areas of work for the Association and on the review of the national strategy, a piece of work led by Sandy Cameron, chair of Lanarkshire ADAT.
- Patsy Krausen, development officer with the Lanarkshire coalition of Family Support Groups has been selected as chair for the National Association of Family Support Groups.
- North and South Lanarkshire Councils jointly launched the new resources for What's The Score at the end of last year, including a video for parents.

The ADAT meeting was followed by a stakeholder event on the Scottish Executive review of treatment and rehabilitation services.

The event was attended by a range of stakeholders, including representatives from family services and the voluntary sector.

The discussion was very productive and copies of Lanarkshire's submissions have been sent to all participants and can also be viewed on the website.

The next ADAT session was due to be held on February 3 and was a joint event around implementation of Getting Our Priorities Right in partnership with North and South child protection committees and North and South children's services planning groups. See article on Getting Our Priorities Right in this edition of the Bulletin.

Chair: Sandy Cameron, South Lanarkshire Council director of social work

NICHOLSON: A SUMMARY

NEW alcohol legislation is expected this year following publication of the Nicholson review on liquor licensing.

The report calls for an end to nationally prescribed licensing hours and calls for premises to have individual operating plans stating who they intend to serve and at what hours. There is no right of licensees to 24 hour opening, each Licensing Board will be able to set its own areas policy.

The report contains 90 recommendations designed to promote good public health and public safety. The committee has attempted to bring consistency and clarity to liquor licensing and to streamline the process of licence application.

The licensing principles are set out: prevention of crime, disorder and public nuisance; promotion of public safety and public health and protection of children. The report recommends the retention of local Licensing Boards, the training for Board members, and the creation of separate licenses for premises and people – and the mandatory training of staff. Whether serving or stewarding staff should recognise their positive role in promoting health and wellbeing – which aims to see customers drinking less harmfully.

The committee also made some controversial suggestions,

such as the presumption that children should be allowed in licensed premises. At the moment children are barred unless the licence has a children's certificate. The committee hope to promote family friendly venues, however many are concerned that too many premises still provide an unhealthy heavy drinking environment which cannot be changed overnight.

The report recommends the creation of Licensing Standards Officers in addition to the licensing police officers, to help licensees maintain the licensing principles. They also recommend that license for private clubs should come under Licensing Boards, rather than Sheriffs; and that police should have a right of access to all licensed premises, and be able to close premises immediately. At the moment if licensees object premises can remain open until an appeal is heard.

There is also concern that extending off-license, for example to 24 hr supermarkets may encourage disorder if people leaving late licensed venues decide they need to buy more alcohol. And people under age are still obtaining liquor directly or indirectly from off licenses – creating concern for communities and individuals in the street. A nationally supported proof of age card may help.

The ADAT will continue to work together with Licensing Boards and Community Safety Partnerships – in a bid to bring about changes in Scotland's drinking culture.

The full report is at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/rllm-00.asp>

PARENTS TO RECEIVE GUIDANCE

LANARKSHIRE kids and their parents will be able to learn more about the dangers of drugs through two locally produced educational videos.

Strathclyde Police have teamed up with video production and training company fps media to produce the videos after North and South Lanarkshire Councils received grants from the Scottish Executive to raise awareness of the issue.

One of the videos will be available in all Lanarkshire schools and youth groups while the other can be obtained from libraries and council buildings and is aimed at parents.

David Craig, Quality Development Officer for North Lanarkshire Council, said: "Both videos will be used extensively across the council areas to help support staff deliver drug and alcohol education to both young people and their parents."

Detective Sergeant Kenny Simpson from Strathclyde Police's STOP Unit, who took part in the videos, added: "There are many urban myths about drugs and it is important that the correct information is available."

New national guides to help parents discuss the dangers of alcohol and drugs with their children have also been launched by the Scottish Executive.

The guides, titled "Drugs: What every parent should know" and "Alcohol: What every parent should know" are being promoted as part of the Know the Score and Healthy Living Alcohol communications campaigns.

The guides have been produced as part of a collaboration between the Scottish Executive, NHS Health Scotland, Scottish Drugs Forum, Scotland Against Drugs, Alcohol Focus Scotland, Kay Roberts (Independent Pharmacy Consultant, Drug Misuse) and Barbara O'Donnell (National Alcohol Liaison Officer).

They will be distributed to a wide range of outlets including Health Boards, pharmacies and GP practices as well as being advertised in the local and regional press. There will be separate adverts each guide and these will be used to build awareness that the guides are available and to promote the drugs and alcohol advice lines: Know the Score 0800 587 5879 and Drinkline 0800 917 8282.

The leaflets will be translated into the following languages: Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Cantonese, Polish, Turkish and Gaelic and provided on audiotape. Quantities of all languages and formats will be sent to each health board and put onto www.healthscotland.com and www.knowthescore.info. Health professionals will be informed that alternative versions are available, and advised to order them direct from their local health board.

DRUG RELATED DEATHS: PREVENTATIVE ACTION SUGGESTED

THE Critical Incident Review Group's preliminary findings on drug related deaths have been reported to the ADAT's full committee meeting.

The presentation represented the results of several months work collating and analysing information on drug-related deaths in Lanarkshire during 2001 and 2002 from a variety of sources including the SDEA database, Sudden Death reports and questionnaires returned from drug treatment and support services.

Based on this work, the group have suggested some early actions in terms of reducing drug-related deaths in Lanarkshire. These include:

- Prioritising education and awareness raising regarding the increased risk of drug-related death for recently released prisoners and improving links to community-based services
- Conducting an audit of the local distribution of Know The Score materials to vulnerable groups and their families and friends
- Continuing and expanding upon the work initiated by Lanarkshire's Harm Reduction Team regarding the provision of resuscitation training for agency staff, service users and their families and friends
- Investigating opportunities for the provision of naloxone (the overdose-reversing opioid antagonist) to appropriate groups in the community

The group have also identified several further pieces of work for the future including:

- Engaging with families and service-user groups
- Investigating non-fatal overdoses and the quality and sharing of information that could identify those at high risk
- Conducting in-depth reviews of subsequent fatalities as required

SCOTLAND'S DRUG MISUSE FIGURES REVEALED

THE latest figures on drug misuse reveal that there has been little change in the number of people in treatment.

The Scottish figures, published on the Scottish Drug Misuse Database, show that 11,472 individuals were seen at services in 2002/03, virtually the same as in 2001/02.

The average age of those attending was 27, with men outnumbering women by two to one.

Just over three-quarters reported heroin use in the last year while use of cocaine has increased from 2%, 190 individuals in 1998/99 to 5%, 548 individuals in 2001/02 and 7%, 739 individuals in 2002/03.

People in their twenties more frequently reported that they had injected during the previous month than any other age groups and in the past year 32% of current injectors reported that they had shared needles/syringes, a fall from last year (36%).

EIU PRIORITIES LAID OUT FOR NEXT THREE YEARS

THE Effective Interventions Unit recently hosted a consultation event for alcohol and drug action officers.

The aim of the event was to gauge opinions on potential key areas of development and the research programme for 2004-07.

The two main development areas looked at included the potential for the EIU to take on alcohol as a topic and the issue of how they can further support local implementation regarding the subject.

Ongoing work planned for 2004/05 includes: "An exploration of the role of substance misuse nurses in Scotland"; "National Investigation of drug-related deaths in 2003"; "Integrated drug service monitoring and effectiveness"; "Evaluation of the Scottish Prison Services Transitional Care arrangements"; and "Safety, Risks and Outcomes from the use of injecting paraphernalia".

Further details can be found on the EIU website at <http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu/eiu.htm>

MIND THE GAP

A report of the joint working group by the Scottish Advisory Committee on Drug Misuse and Scottish Advisory Committee on Alcohol Misuse is available, titled Meeting the Needs of People with Co-occurring Substance Misuse and Mental Health Problems.

NEW SCHEME TAKES TOUGH LINE TO HELP ALCOHOL MISUSERS MOVE ON TO BRIGHTER FUTURES

IT'S widely recognised that within Lanarkshire there is a need for more projects that deal with alcohol misuse to be set up. For that reason the fact that a brand new scheme will kick off this month is good news. But what's even more encouraging is that the latest project has been designed to be the most intensive yet in helping those newly abstaining from drink to move on.

The Alcohol Recovery Programme has been set up in Coatbridge as an attempt to develop new approaches to treatment and rehabilitation and aims to result in more positive outcomes for people who wish to confront their alcohol misuse problems.

Within Lanarkshire it is estimated that 48,278 people are currently at risk of alcohol related harm, with around one alcohol related death per day. Alcohol misuse costs industry £20 million annually and is a factor in around 42% of traffic deaths, 40% of drowning and 46% of deaths in fires.

The Alcohol Recovery Programme, which the ADAT supports, will bring together 10 people who have detoxed within the last few weeks. They will work together five days per week in an eight-week programme that will help them confront and deal with a range of issues, not simply their alcohol misuse.

Brian Norton, Alcohol Support Officer for Coatbridge SIP, will co-ordinate the programme, which is due to begin at the beginning of February.

He explained: "We'll be looking at the effects that alcohol has on the family as well as the physical and psychological effects it has on the person using it.

"But as well as alcohol we'll be looking at welfare rights, education, employment, social and leisure issues, community safety and domestic violence. We felt that a programme as wide ranging as this was something we should have in the local area and we believe there's no other programme that will be as concentrated."

Those taking part in the programme are aged from their early twenties to those in their forties and they are all looking for support to move on to lead more fulfilling lives, with finding employment being a major aim.

In order to take part in the programme service users have been required to undergo detox and agree to abstain from alcohol for the duration of the programme.

The scheme, which has been set up in Townhead Community Centre in Coatbridge, is designed to make sure that partners and relevant family members can take part in some sections that require their understanding and appreciation.

As well as looking at the problems of alcohol including

relapse prevention and strategies for continuing abstinence, the programme will also provide practical input on matters such as benefits advice, debt counselling, housing issues and employment issues.

Brian Norton said: "I am very optimistic that the programme will go well. All the partners who have been involved have been more than happy to offer support whether financially or by providing staff to help run the programme or free accommodation so that has been very encouraging.

"Although it is a one off programme I am hopeful that the outcomes will be so positive that it will be repeated and even duplicated throughout Lanarkshire."

The programme will contain a mixture of educational and social topics, which are designed to help those taking part to achieve a successful resolution to their alcohol misuse.

The educational input will include sessions on 'what is an alcohol problem', 'effects of alcohol on the brain and body', 'tactics/strategies for continuing abstinence', 'relapse prevention', effects of alcohol on the family', 'troublesome drinking times', 'drinking diary', 'anxiety management' and relaxation techniques'.

The social sessions will provide practical help and advice in areas such as benefits, debt counselling, housing, and introductions to other community resources i.e. Leisure Services, Life Long Learning and Community Education and employment.

The programme will involve as many relevant agencies and services as possible and staff will be made available to provide the sessional inputs that are covered by their various responsibilities.

So while enthusiasm and commitment may be in abundance among the staff from services taking part in the programme, will the same commitment be seen among those the programme has been set up to help? Brian Norton believes so.

"An important part of the assessment for potential participants was to ensure that they were motivated and would be willing to give up the time required to come along to each session and remain abstinent from alcohol. I am optimistic that they can do it," he said with conviction.

The programme will be evaluated week by week and feedback from the participants will be integral in determining that the course content is relevant and addressing their needs.

External evaluation will also be undertaken to measure the programme which will not only consider the position of the participants but will also take into account the views of their families.

A full evaluation report will be presented to all the partner organisations to assist in their considerations for any future expansion of similar programmes.

ADAT PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

HEALTH PROMOTION

Cocaine & Crack Cocaine Training

NHS Lanarkshire's Health Promotion Department are organising a 2-day course on cocaine and crack cocaine to take place on March 23 and 24 this year. The training is for agencies and individuals who come into contact with clients using cocaine or crack cocaine.

Health Promotion first organised cocaine and crack cocaine training last year in response to a research report by STRADA, which is based at Glasgow University. In this report, STRADA noted increasing use of cocaine and crack cocaine in Scotland.

The 2-day training course will be provided by COCA, an independent organisation based in London which was set up to support professionals working with people who have issues around crack cocaine and cocaine. (You can check out COCA at www.coca.org.uk)

The Course will cover topics such as

History of cocaine and crack cocaine
Routes of using
Health information
Cycles of use
Cravings
Euphoric recall
Attracting users to services
Working with lapses
Aftercare/further support
Appropriate service development

If you are interested in attending this training, please contact Louise Kane, health promotion projects manager on 01698 258795 or e-mail louise.kane@lanhb.scot.nhs.uk

Motivational Interviewing

A series of 3-day training courses will be available during February and March 2004. The Health Promotion Department will shortly be inviting service managers to nominate appropriate members of staff to fill available places. This is the first component in a planned programme of training that will also include Solution-Focused Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Credit Card Size Resources

The Health Promotion Departments development of the credit card sized booklets for Drug & Alcohol Services, planned for 2003/04, covering the Airdrie, Coatbridge and Cumbernauld LHCC areas is nearing completion. These resources are for information and signposting people to the relevant drug and alcohol services in their local area, and should be available by February 2004.

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

Holiday Caravan Project

Lanarkshire Coalition of Family Support Groups has received funding from the Social Inclusion Partnership Drug Misuse budget to purchase a caravan and site it in a holiday caravan park in Scotland.

This will allow family members the opportunity to have a break away from the area they live and relieve the pressures they live with on a day to day basis. The holiday caravan will also give family members and siblings an opportunity to mix in a social environment where their background circumstances are not known.

Training for Family Members

The Coalition has also received funding from the Drugs Misuse Budget to train family members in a range of alternative therapies, this will allow family members who need to move on from family support groups the chance to enhance their own skills and knowledge and build on their confidence and self esteem. It will also allow them to offer other family members a service within the group setting and while it will enable them to remain as a group member, it will also allow them to take the next step in their own recovery.

Family Support Seminar

A seminar for family members is planned for March this year. The seminar will be open to all members of Family Support Groups in the Lanarkshire area. We would also invite individual family members that we have contact with across Lanarkshire who are not involved in groups.

This seminar will give family members the opportunity to come together and look at ways they can address the issues and concerns they have. It is also planned to invite a range of service providers to talk about the services they provide to drug misusers to give family members a better understanding of what services are on offer and how they can be contacted. The afternoon will be dedicated to family members looking at issues like family dynamics, helping strategies and stress management.

ADDICTIONS BOARD

The Addictions Board research sub-group have a number of current research proposals in progress or under consideration.

- The Subutex Feasibility Study has now started and four patients from Motherwell/Clydesdale and four patients from the Lanarkshire Drug Service have commenced treatment.
- Needs assessment work is being conducted in the Clydesdale area for hard to reach and out of reach groups of drug users.
- Four people have been recruited into the Schering-Plough Study on Hepatitis C.
- Research is due to begin in September/October 2004 into increasing access to primary care for excluded, marginalized and vulnerable people.

Rosemary Robertson, clinical nurse specialist, working with homeless people, has received a bursary from the Trust to carry the research out as part of her Master's degree.

**IF, AS AN ADAT PARTNER,
YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR
NEWS TO BE INCLUDED IN
THIS SECTION PLEASE**

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ADAT SUB-GROUPS: UPDATES

EMPLOYMENT

THE employment sub-group and ADAT are to join forces to help small businesses promote and develop alcohol and drugs policies in the workplace.

The Scottish Executive's Plan for Action on alcohol problems estimates the economic cost of alcohol problems to the Scottish economy as £1 billion every year with the cost to Lanarkshire estimated at between £30 - £50 million.

The ADAT employment sub-group has

been working successfully for some time to help former users into jobs, training and further education with the Progress 2 Work initiative and the support of the New Deal.

The employment group will be working with the ADAT to promote better alcohol and drugs policies in the workplace and to help employers retain trained and experienced staff rather than lose them to alcohol or drugs problems.

Large employers will already have their own Human Resources Department and Occupational Health but may still be able to improve their alcohol and drugs policies and practices but smaller

companies, who face the same legal obligations, are likely to need support. In the next year we will have a joint task group to assist smaller businesses promote and develop alcohol and drugs policies in the workplace.

They will be looking at establishing policies that try to help people before the need for discipline and also how to use discipline constructively to help and retain employees rather than sacking them.

Chair: Anne Shiels, Routes To Inclusion manager, South Lanarkshire Council

YOUNG PEOPLE

THE group is currently reviewing its structure. The key priorities for task groups are:

- Education issues including non-school based work. Recent projects have included new CD roms and videos and an animation project in partnership with drug users is underway

- Getting Our Priorities Right
- Assessment of Treatment Needs for Young People

Chair: Michael O'Neill, North Lanarkshire Council director of education

COMMUNITIES AND AVAILABILITY

THE group is currently considering the need to develop more focus on community involvement. Their work has recently focused very much around the criminal justice agenda with the main development being the establishment of the Arrest Referral Scheme.

The group is also involved in the issue of drug related deaths and harm reduction.

Chair: Tom Buchan, Divisional Commander N Division

TREATMENT AND CARE

THE key developments being considered by the group are the development of community detox and support programmes including:

- A response to the national waiting list initiative
- Out of hours pilot for Monklands Hospital
- Priorities for alcohol developments and an overall review of needs and resources

The group is currently restructuring and would hope to involve a wide range of people in some of the above tasks.

Chair: Jim Dickie, North Lanarkshire Council director of social work

PAVING THE WAY FOR PROGRESSION

A GROUP has been set up to look at improving access into alcohol and drug services and raising standards.

Dr Alastair Cook, associate medical director with the Primary Care Trust is chairing the short life working group on the integration of alcohol and drug services.

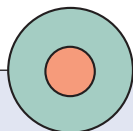
The group will report to both the ADAT and the Joint Future Implementation Groups. The purpose of the group will be to explore what action is needed to improve services and access.

The issues to be covered include shared assessment, information sharing and possible models for service delivery, improvement

A series of seminars has been initiated in local areas to explain the concept of Joint Futures and work is currently being undertaken.

Valerie Tallon, Addictions Board co-ordinator, is arranging the dates for events.

Currently work in the Cumbernauld and Hamilton areas has been completed and meetings are now being set up in other areas.



In Brief

JOINT SEMINAR

A seminar involving representatives from substance misuse and mental health services was held on January 22. The focus of the event, chaired by Dr Shay Griffin, lead clinician for the addictions board, was a presentation by Dr Charles Lind, a member of the joint working group followed by a workshop discussion. The report is now available.

PILOT SCHEME

A subutex detox pilot, co-ordinated by Dr Lucy Cocayne, will take place in Lanarkshire providing detox and support programmes. The outcomes will be reported in a future issue of the Bulletin.

PLACEMENTS

NHS Lanarkshire as part of its financial sustainability programme is currently reviewing out of area treatments.

Drug and alcohol placements are one of the biggest spending areas and Lanarkshire ADAT is currently looking at a range of developments including development of community services, rapid access for assessment and comprehensive assessment care planning as part of a joined up approach. The next issue of the Bulletin will contain further information.

FACTS ON CANNABIS SPELLED OUT

A CAMPAIGN to reinforce the message that cannabis remains illegal has been launched.

The Know the Score reclassification of cannabis campaign was launched at the end of January this year with the key message that reclassification of cannabis from Class B to Class C makes no difference to the fact that possession of cannabis will remain a criminal offence.

The long-standing power in Scotland to arrest for cannabis possession will remain in place and the campaign will be re-enforcing that message to the public.

An advertising campaign, which began being at the end of January and includes radio advertising, new Know the Score leaflets and posters and an updated Know the Score cannabis booklet, warns that cannabis remains a controlled drug and those found in possession are, and will continue to be, reported to the Procurator Fiscal.

It is the Fiscal who will decide if criminal proceedings should be taken or an alternative to prosecution based on the individual circumstances of the offence. The Fiscal has a range of options available when a person is reported for possession of cannabis and the existing approach to cannabis offences remains appropriate.

Cannabis is being reclassified in order that the law is consistent with advice about its level of harm, relative to other controlled drugs. However, there are a number of reasons why cannabis is still considered a harmful drug:

- First-time users feel confused and distressed and panic and anxiety attacks are common side effects
- Cannabis causes damage to people's ability to learn and carry out many tasks, including operating machinery and driving vehicles
- Cannabis aggravates mental illnesses, in particular, there is evidence that it exacerbates schizophrenia in people who are already affected
- Long-term use of cannabis can cause lung cancer, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases
- Regular heavy use may cause nerve damage and affect learning abilities, which may not be reversible

NEW POST

A new development officer has been appointed to help promote voluntary sector alternatives and training, particularly for people with alcohol problems.

Margaret Halbert, an experienced addictions counsellor who has most recently worked with the Blantyre and North Hamilton Social Inclusion Partnership, takes up the post this month.

Lanarkshire has around 150 individual AA meetings, but other voluntary options are more limited. ADAT's Alcohol Action Group is working with Alcohol Focus Scotland to promote voluntary sector alternatives, particularly for people with alcohol problems, and as a training resource.

The ADAT has created the development officer post in partnership with Alcohol Focus Scotland, the ADAT and the role will include conducting a needs assessment, creating an action plan, and the initial development of alcohol counselling. The aim is to encourage voluntary sector services, independent of and augmenting statutory provision.

WHAT'S THE SCORE

The evaluation of the education pack 'What's the Score' is now complete and is available on the ADAT pages of the NHS website (<http://www.nhslanarkshire.co.uk/adat>). Details of the implementation of the report's recommendations will feature in the next edition of the bulletin.

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WEBSITES
www.knowthescore.info for general information on drugs
www.nhslanarkshire.co.uk for information on ADAT
www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org for details on national policy and planning

KNOW
THE
SCORE