

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS UNIT

FEEDBACK FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLES TREATMENT SEMINARS

February - May 2003

Services for Young People with Problematic Drug Misuse - a Guide to Principles and Practice

This document provides information and evidence to support the development of services for young people experiencing problems due to their own problematic drugs and /or substance misuse. The guide focuses on the needs of Drug Action Teams in their role as commissioners of services as well as those involved in the direct delivery of services. The document sets out: -

- Definitions of the target client group and their wider needs
- Key principles underpinning effective services
- Key issues to address in delivering services

The report was published in January 2003. Seminars were held in Glasgow and Dundee in February and in Stirling at the beginning of May to disseminate the results and promote discussion and networking amongst those involved in services for young people.

We undertook to let all participants have a summary of the main points raised in the workshops. In this brief feedback sheet, we give particular emphasis to points that were raised and were common to all the discussions. We have grouped the views expressed by participants under the following headings:

- Key features of engaging with young people
- How the Scottish Executive, service commissioners and providers move towards the provision of services which are more responsive to the needs of young people.

Key features of engaging with young people

Engaging with young people requires:

- Services to go to where young people are and use existing networks and forums
- Careful use of language - use the language of young people
- Listen to young people and hear what they say
- Communicate in the way young people do - i.e. text, video, phone, word of mouth....
- Consultations must be inclusive - traditionally able young people participate but it is important that less able young people are able to express their views and participate
- Provide advocacy and mentoring services to help empower young people.
- Young people have an important role as educators which should be recognised.

An important key to successful engagement with young people is the choice of staff. There was a strong view that staff should be skilled and trained in working with young people and need not have expertise in drug treatment. Involving young people in the planning and delivery of services is important. This needs to be done in a sensitive and informed way. The services need to reflect what young people want and what they find acceptable. Involvement and representation by young people should be 'real' and not tokenistic. There was significant support for a consultation method which is attractive to young people and which might involve an incentive for them.

There is a need for services to provide consistency in messages to young people from all sectors and services. An integrated approach for treatment, care and support for young people is essential.

A number of **barriers** to successful engagement were identified and where they exist these need to be addressed before effective participation by young people can be achieved. Issues to be addressed include:

- Lack of integrated services dedicated to young people
- Short term funding systems creates difficulty for long term planning
- Lack of 'flexible' services - open at times to suit young people
- Conflicting interpretations of 'confidentiality' issues for young people and conflicting legislative interpretations of the age of young people. There is a need for local protocols to address consent and disclosure issues.

How the Scottish Executive, service commissioners and providers move towards the provision of services which are more responsive to the needs of young people.

Suggested Action Points for Scottish Executive

- Streamline the funding system to reduce the number of funding sources and establish a 5 year funding programme
- Review the definitions of young people and provide a cohesive message as to what age ranges are involved
- There needs to be a flexible cut off age to allow a transition into adult services (16 years does not mean that young people become adults)
- The EIU should seek to involve young people in their consultations
- There is a need for EIU to offer 'local' dissemination seminars and to encourage and support partnership working.

Suggested Action Points for Service Commissioners and Providers are:

- More transparency about decision making and use of funds
- Joint training and a focus on integrated services leading to partnership working
- Effective consultation with young people and a willingness to involve them in the provision and delivery of services.

There was discussion about the need to join up services for young people and to recognise that drug problems were likely to be one of a number of problems which young people need to address. In order to do this effectively services need to be able to offer a holistic approach to treatment, care and support. Recognition of this style of approach needs support from the Scottish Executive through legislative and funding routes and by Commissioners of services by offering the maximum local flexibility.

Next Steps

We also intend to produce:

- **A Digest of Assessment Tools which can be used as part of the assessment process for young people involved with problematic drug use**
- **An Evaluation Guide for Services for Young People**
- **Ongoing advice and support to Drug Action Teams, Commissioners and Service providers as they seek to develop services for young people**

All our publications are available on the EIU section of the Drug Misuse in Scotland web site: <http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu>

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