



The Scottish Parliament

The Information Centre

Subject Map

Devolved Area Series/20

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DRUG MISUSE IN SCOTLAND

Policy on drug misuse is mainly devolved to the Scottish Parliament with only several aspects reserved to Westminster. Reserved matters are set out under Head B (Home Affairs) in schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998.¹ Drug misuse has been identified as a major issue involving a number of devolved responsibilities. As such, drug misuse in Scotland is viewed as a cross-cutting issue requiring a co-ordinated approach across a number of Departments and agencies. This subject map² provides a brief outline of the complex framework of responsibilities in this area and the current Scottish approach to dealing with drug misuse.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Scottish Executive

Within the Scottish Executive, the Minister with overall responsibility for co-ordinating drug policy is the Deputy Minister for Justice. The Deputy Minister for Justice chairs a new Ministerial Committee on drug misuse. Membership of the Committee is:

Angus MacKay, Deputy Minister for Justice (Chair)
Sam Galbraith, Minister for Education and Children

¹ Broadly covering the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, some aspects of international co-operation, and drug trafficking, including legislation on the proceeds of crime.

² More detailed information will be provided in a forthcoming related Research Note on drugs misuse.

Iain Gray, Deputy Minister for Community Care
Jackie Baillie, Deputy Minister for Communities

The Ministerial Committee met for the first time on 17 August 1999. The Deputy Minister for Justice also now chairs the Scottish Advisory Committee on Drug Misuse (SACDM) which is responsible for national co-ordination and monitoring of drug misuse issues. Membership includes a number of representatives of relevant organisations (usually at chief officer level), representatives of the voluntary sector and a number of other experts. SACDM aims to:³

- Assess progress on the implementation of the strategy
- Oversee monitoring arrangements
- Develop policy
- Oversee information and research requirements
- Make adjustments to the strategy as necessary

SACDM was chaired by a Minister for the first time in February 1999 when the then Minister for Health, Sam Galbraith took over the chair from the head of the Administration Group of the Public Health Policy Unit (PHPU) in the Scottish Office Health Department. The PHPU representative is now the Deputy Chair of SACDM.

Responsibility for policy co-ordination on drug misuse across Scottish Executive Departments continues to lie with PHPU, although the Unit reports to Angus MacKay, as Deputy Minister for Justice. Attempts to manage the problems associated with drug misuse involves many policy areas across the Executive, including health, education, social work and community care, housing, police, prisons, courts and Crown Office.

National Health Service in Scotland

The National Health Service in Scotland (NHSiS) through its Information and Statistics Division (ISD) is responsible for co-ordinating the *Scottish Drug Misuse Information Strategy*. The Strategy was launched and endorsed by SACDM in 1998. The aim of the Strategy is to provide a coherent structure for the provision of information to assist in addressing the problems associated with drug misuse. ISD's role focuses on gathering and disseminating information and working towards standardisation in data collection.

Drug Action Teams

Drug Action Teams (DATs) are responsible for co-ordinating strategies to tackle drug misuse problems at local level. DATs were originally established in 1995 in each Health Board Area but, in some parts of Scotland, increasingly reflect local authority boundaries. The aim in establishing DATs was to bring together key

³ The Scottish Office (1999) *Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office

personnel who would be able to authorise both policy development and expenditure. Each DAT should ideally be chaired at chief officer level and consist of members from the core partners: Health Boards, local authorities (social care, criminal justice, social work, education and housing interests), police, prisons and the voluntary sector. DATs should '*meet regularly to agree purchasing priorities in support of the strategy*'.⁴ Drug Action Teams are supported at local level by Drug Development Officers (DDOs) and Local Drugs Forums.

Other agencies

Beyond the Scottish Executive Departments and the National Health Service in Scotland, many other organisations have responsibility for local policy and implementation in the area of drug misuse. At a national level, these include local authority departments, police forces, the Scottish Prison Service, the Scottish Courts Service, and HM Customs and Excise. The voluntary sector also has a major role in providing services alongside local authorities. The Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) is the umbrella agency in relation to agencies concerned with drugs problems. SDF is core-funded by the Department of Health and was established in 1986 to provide advice and information on drug misuse, to promote collaborative and evidence-based approaches to dealing with drug misuse problems and to facilitate communication and co-ordination among drugs workers.

In 1998, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) created a dedicated post of Local Government Drugs Officer with funding from the then Scottish Office. This led to the establishment of the Scottish Local Government Drugs Forum in October 1998. The Forum consists of elected members and has representatives from all political groups.

In addition, many other bodies have a role to play, including Chambers of Commerce, Scottish Business in the Community, the Employment Service, Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) and FE Colleges. The *Scotland Against Drugs* campaign (SAD) was refocused in January 1998 to concentrate on communities and to take the lead in encouraging private sector involvement in funding local drug projects.

CURRENT STRATEGY

The UK strategy

In April 1998, the UK Government published its 10-year strategy for tackling drug misuse⁵. The strategy was based on a review of the work to date in this area by the UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator, the 'drugs tsar' who also monitors progress made under the strategy. The strategy set out four broad aims:

⁴ [The Scottish Office \(1999\) Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership, The Stationery Office, p.63](#)

⁵ [Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain: The Government's 10-Year Strategy for Tackling Drug Misuse, Cm 3945, The Stationery Office](#)

- Preventing young people misusing drugs
- Protecting communities from drug-related anti-social and criminal behaviour
- Treating people to overcome their drug problems
- Stifling availability of illegal drugs

Each of these aims is related to a key objective, a programme of action and performance indicators to assess progress.

The Scottish approach

In March 1999, The Scottish Office published its own strategy document, *Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership*⁶. This document sets out the Scottish approach, based on the four priority areas identified in the aims of the UK strategy. For each of these areas, specific Scottish objectives and action priorities are outlined⁷.

Because of the cross-cutting nature of the issue, expenditure is spread over a number of departments and agencies. This makes it difficult to identify precisely the resources that are dedicated to drug misuse, and the Strategy Document highlights this.⁸ The Comprehensive Spending Review of 1998 increased headline expenditure from £50 million to £55 million.

Since then additional funding has been announced by the Scottish Executive:

- £0.6 million for Criminal Justice Social Work projects and £2 million for Health Board specialist services (August 1999)
- DAT funding was doubled to £1 million and £0.3 million to establish a prevention and effectiveness centre (September 1999)

CURRENT ISSUES

Concerns are currently being expressed about whether the balance of responses to drug misuse is appropriate. The Deputy Justice Minister has stressed⁹ that the long term solution to drugs misuse is social inclusion, but that in the short term enforcement is the priority, with treatment and rehabilitation for drug misusers in the medium term. This accords with the recent announcement¹⁰ that the Scottish Executive will establish the Drug Enforcement Agency outlined in the Partnership

⁶ [The Scottish Office \(1999\) Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership, The Stationery Office](#)

⁷ These objectives and action plans are also presented in a separate summary [document The Scottish Office \(1999\) Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership-Scotland's objectives and action priorities, The Stationery Office](#)

⁸ [The Scottish Office \(1999\) Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership, The Stationery Office](#), p.55

⁹ Keynote speech given at a joint SDF/COSLA seminar on drugs and crime on 28 September 1999.

¹⁰ [Scottish Executive News Release Counting the Days to the DEA, SE 0692/99](#)

agreement¹¹ early next year. However, the Deputy Minister for Justice has said¹² that he is committed to arguing the case to provide resources for treatment for drug misusers. This is in response to research¹³ which shows that for every £1 spent on treatment, £3 is saved elsewhere in the system. This view was endorsed by the Scottish Drugs Forum All-Party Working Group:

There is evidence that spending on drug treatment and care services will reduce costs in other areas (for example, reduce crime and criminal justice service costs).¹⁴

Other important issues likely to effect the debate in future are:

- The impact of drug misuse on communities
- The variation in access to appropriate services in different parts of Scotland
- The availability of through care following discharge from treatment or prison

Subject Maps are compiled for the benefit of Members of Parliament and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise the general public.

¹¹ Donald Dewar and Jim Wallace *Partnership for Scotland: An Agreement for the First Scottish Parliament*, May 1999

¹² Keynote speech given at a joint SDF/COSLA seminar on drugs and crime on 28 September 1999.

¹³ Department of Health National Treatment Outcome Research Study, *3rd Bulletin*, April 1998

¹⁴ Scottish Drugs Forum (1999) *Drug Use in Scotland: A Shared Agenda for the Scottish Parliament* (Report of the Scottish Drugs Forum All-Party Working Group - Executive Summary)
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