



Final Report on Research to Improve the Take-up of the 'Getting into Gear' Programme

for

West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS)

by

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1. SUMMARY

'Getting into Gear' (GIG) is a programme run by West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS) based in Livingston and funded by the West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Team (West Lothian DAT) for three years. The programme was set up in April 2001 and targets unemployed ex- and stabilised drug and alcohol users aged 16-40 years in West Lothian. It aims to help them take the first steps to move on in life towards education, training or employment or to provide them with structure and a routine.

The aim of this research was to find out why the numbers of referrals and students starting or completing the GIG programme have been lower than anticipated and to identify ways of attracting more students and increasing participation rates.

Before the programme started, WLDAS anticipated receiving approximately fifty referrals per year to the GIG programme. Referral rates were initially slow for the first two years with only 52 referrals being received. The numbers of referrals for 2003¹, however, have already exceeded previous estimates with 51 referrals received from agencies in approximately six months.

A total of approximately 22 potential students for the GIG programme were identified by the research.

Overall, students and service providers gave positive feedback on the GIG programme. The service providers consulted felt that the GIG programme was an important service within West Lothian and the majority said that they would like it to continue.

All of the current and past students consulted said that they had enjoyed the GIG programme and particularly appreciated the structure it provided within their lives. Some past students had moved on in life as a result of the programme, and were now in work placements or further education. Some of the students raised negative issues in relation to particular staff members although these staff were also praised by other students for being approachable and friendly. The two potential students consulted expressed enthusiasm about taking part in the GIG programme again and both commented that they intended to do so.

Service providers suggested that referral rates might have been lower than anticipated due to the following factors:

- some clients being above the 40 years age limit
- some clients being uncomfortable in a group situation
- there being insufficient stabilised clients

¹ Figures as of October 2003

- service providers not having enough information on course content and updates on any changes²
- some service providers being cautious about referring 'vulnerable' and recently stabilised clients to a group programme
- the course initially being very employment-focused which was unsuitable for many clients at the time³

Service providers and students suggested similar ways in which the GIG programme could be improved. Both felt that GIG should:

- employ staff experienced in dealing with substance-abusing clients
- provide detailed information on the GIG programme to referrers and to students at the start
- offer a more individually-tailored programme with an increased opportunity for personal support for students⁴

In addition service providers felt that GIG could be improved by:

- promoting the programme to potential students through talks by a previous student
- re-introducing a pre-programme similar to 'First Gear' (see description of programme under introduction, section 2) which would prepare some clients for the main programme or for clients who require a more basic programme
- improving the communication and relationships between the GIG team and some service providers

In addition students suggested that GIG could be improved by:

- providing information on benefits
- providing longer work placements
- increasing the length of the programme to 12-16 weeks
- providing opportunities for students to discuss their drug/alcohol background
- having flexibility for students over taking part in particular course topics

Service providers and students suggested ways of attracting more students to take part in the programme and to boost participation rates. In summary service providers suggested that GIG should:

² GIG report that most referrers were visited on a number of occasions through team meetings and on an individual basis, although they acknowledge that it is possible that this may not have been done as frequently as required due to GIG staff shortages and staff turnover

³ GIG feel that in running this type of programme, it can be difficult to strike a balance between providing an employability programme and the meeting the other needs of previous substance misusers such as dealing with the issues associated with substance misuse

⁴ GIG feel that it is difficult to provide personal support for students due to fact they are a small team but that students have access to WLDAS' counselling service if they need this type of support

- inform referrers of changes to the programme by sending out leaflets, holding regular meetings or holding an 'open afternoon' on the GIG programme and its aims
- provide a printout of programme content for referrers and clients
- improve communication between the CDPS and GIG
- increase the age limit of students

In summary students suggested:

- improving advertising by advertising in: **all** health centres, the CDPS, drug centres, the 'Advice Shop', 'West Lothian Connected' in the Almondvale Centre, job centres, Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) offices, police stations and chemists and putting leaflets about GIG through doors
- improving communication between the CDPS and the GIG team
- improving information by providing a more detailed course content outline and displaying this at key sites (listed above)

It should be noted that some of the suggestions made by service providers and students have already been tried or implemented by GIG. It is the view of GIG/WLDAS that many of these comments and suggestions on the GIG programme made by students and service providers within this report may reflect confusion about the programme's aims and the nature of the programme offered. GIG describe their programme as an employability/skill-building programme as opposed to a drug therapy programme.

The GIG programme is constantly evolving and adapting in response to the needs of the students and what works best for and with this client group. GIG report that they have learned a number of things from running the programme and that there are issues in with programmes of this nature in relation to:

- managing students in terms of their timekeeping and attendance
- some students topping up with banned substances during the day
- the selling of drugs to other students on the course

2. INTRODUCTION

'Getting into Gear' (GIG) is a programme run by West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS) based in Livingston and funded by the West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Team (West Lothian DAT) for three years. The programme was set up in April 2001.

GIG aims to help unemployed ex- and stabilised drug and alcohol users aged 16-40 years in West Lothian move on in life.

There have been a number of changes made to the content of the GIG programme since it began. The programme was initially focused on job-seeking skills and preparation for employment through examining: skills profiles, job interests, the local labour market, job applications and interview techniques. Complementary therapies and leisure activities were also included at this stage.

A programme called 'First Gear' was introduced by WLDAS in August 2002 to offer support to those not ready for GIG for a variety of reasons including: having a chaotic lifestyle, suffering from low self-esteem or not being at the right stage to consider or to sustain employment. 'First Gear' was designed to focus on: personal development, confidence building, relapse prevention and motivation. The programme was intended to run for half a day per week but was withdrawn due to low participation rates.

The current programme reflects what GIG has learned about client requirements; paid employment is not considered by GIG to be realistically achievable in the near future for the majority of their clients. GIG is now a 'pre-employment' programme, which aims to help students into voluntary work or further education or by providing stability, a routine and improving self-esteem according to the student's needs. The content is less directly employment-focused than previously and concentrates instead on: group work, confidence-building, assertiveness, personal development, leisure activities and arts and crafts.

The initial referral system was that service providers referred clients. This was changed in April 2002 to cut down on the workload for agencies; service providers now describe the programme to relevant clients who then self-refer to the programme if interested, although service providers may still refer directly if they wish. Once a client has self-referred, they are assessed by the GIG team for suitability for the course.

Since June 2003, students may join the programme at any time as it is a rolling programme.

The programme runs for three days a week, including a drop-in session.

Since the inception of the service, the numbers of referrals and students starting or completing the programme have been lower than anticipated. The aim of the research was to find out why that was the case, by investigating the following:

- the numbers of people expected to be eligible for the service, prior to its establishment
- the numbers of potential students, i.e. the numbers of ex- and stabilised drug and alcohol users aged between 16 and 40 in West Lothian
- any barriers which exist to prevent either referrals or those referred becoming students, and the nature of those barriers
- which factors would attract potential students to the service
- what would prevent student non-attendance and drop-out

It was also intended that the research was used to market the service to new potential students by a member of the GIG team attending the interview and describing an outline of the programme.

It was hoped that the research would identify ways to increase referral to, take-up and completion of the Getting into Gear programme and lead to greater

awareness and take-up of the Getting into Gear service amongst potential students.

3. METHODS

The fieldwork for the research was intended to focus on:

- service providers
- potential students – those who are eligible for the programme but who have not yet attended, or those who had started the course but dropped out)
- students who were currently on the programme
- students who have completed the programme

3.1 Service providers

It was decided that telephone interviews should be used instead of a questionnaire, to allow more in-depth information to be gathered and to achieve a higher response rate than is usual for a postal questionnaire. Individual service providers from the full range of service providers (see 4.4 for list of agencies) were contacted by telephone both to set up an interview and to enquire whether they had any current clients who met the criteria of the GIG programme. All suitable current clients identified were invited to be interviewed via a letter sent to and distributed by the service provider, in order to protect client anonymity.

Telephone interviews with service providers investigated:

- knowledge of the GIG course and the referral criteria
- views on referrals: data on how many clients they had referred, client outcomes on the GIG programme and what they had thought of the programme
- views on why referral to and completion of the programme might be lower than expected

3.2 Focus groups and interviews with students

Focus groups were held with current and past students. It was felt that these groups would be more inclined to take part in a group discussion, having already experienced group sessions in GIG. Potential students were interviewed face-to-face, as previous research suggested that this was a more appropriate method for this group.

The focus groups with current and past students looked at:

- reasons for deciding to take part in GIG
- what students thought of the programme and their likes and dislikes of it
- whether it had been useful for them and any ways in which it could be improved
- students' views on any barriers to taking part in the course, why other students on their course had dropped out and how GIG could encourage

them to complete it and ways they could attract higher numbers of ex- and stabilised substance misusers to take part in the programme

Interviews with non-completing, potential students examined:

- experience of barriers to work, education and training
- views on what the course covers and particular aspects of interest
- whether they regarded themselves as stabilised
- whether heard about the GIG programme before the interview
- what would make it easier to take part in/complete the GIG programme
- factors which would prevent participation in the programme
- (if already taken part in GIG) reasons for non-completion
- ways programme could be improved

4. RESULTS

4.1 Numbers of referrals to GIG

The WLDAS manager identified a need within their services for a rehabilitation programme focusing on unemployed, stabilised, ex-drug/alcohol users which would help them to get a job, or enter training or education.

The expectation at the inception of the programme, based on discussions between WLDAS and CDPS, was that approximately **fifty referrals per annum** would be received from agencies. Table 1 shows the actual numbers of referrals received per year.

April 2001-March 2002	April 2002-March 2003	April 2003-October 2003	Total
22	30	51	103

Referral rates to GIG were initially slow with only 22 referrals being received in the first year (although recruitment for the programme did not commence until September 2001). Similarly, there were lower than anticipated referrals in the second year of GIG, with only 30 referrals being received. The numbers of referrals for this year, however, have already exceeded previous estimates with 51 referrals received from agencies in approximately six months.

4.2 Rates of participation in the GIG programme

Although referral rates have increased in GIG's final year (2003-2004), participation rates remain relatively low. Table 2 shows the number of students by age group: completing the programme, on the programme, who dropped out and who were assessed or contacted but did not start the programme.

Table 2: Participation rates in GIG programme⁵			
	16-25 years	26-40 years	Total
Referred and awaiting assessment or waiting to start programme	4	3	7
Currently on programme	2	4	6
Completed programme	4	14	18
Dropped out of or excluded from programme	5	14	19
Assessed and accepted but (did not attend)	8	18	26
Referred, contacted by GIG But did not attend assessment	16	11	27
Total referred	39	64	103

The majority of students and potential students were aged 26-40 (62%).

51% (53 out of 103) of the clients who referred themselves did not start the GIG programme after being contacted or assessed.

42% (18 out of 43) of students who started the course have completed it. 14% (6 out of 43) of those who started the programme were still taking part.

44% (19 out of 43) of students who started the GIG course dropped out of or were excluded from the programme.

The remaining students (7 out of 103) were either awaiting assessment or waiting to start the programme.

Those aged 26-40 were more likely to complete the course (22% of those referred) than those aged 16-25 (10%). The younger age group were more likely to drop out prior to assessment (41% of those referred) and the older age group were more likely to drop out after assessment (28%) or during the course (22%).

⁵ Figures correct as of 28.8.03

4.3 Number of research participants

Service providers

Ten telephone interviews were carried out with professionals from six key service providers identified by WLDAS (one was a brief discussion rather than a full interview). No-one from the 'Criminal Justice Team' (CJT) agreed to take part in an interview, despite repeated attempts to make contact. Table 3 below shows the agencies and numbers of staff from each organisation who participated in the research.

Agency	Number of staff participating
Community Drugs Problem Service (CDPS)	2
Social Work Drugs Team (SWDT)	2
PENUMBRA (Tenancy support)	1
Edinburgh and Lothian Council on Alcohol (ELCA)	1
WLDAS	1
Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPNs)	2
CJT	0
Total⁶	9

Students

Twelve students were consulted in focus groups and two by interviews giving a total of fourteen students taking part in the research. Table 4 below shows the numbers of participating students with particular characteristics including: gender, age ranges, area of residence and whether they were referred for drug or alcohol problems or both.

Gender	Age range	Area of residence	Reason referred
Males- 9	16-25 yrs- 3	Livingston- 5	Drug problem- 3
Females- 5	26-30 yrs- 2	Armadale- 3	Alcohol problem- 2
	31-35 yrs- 6	Blackridge- 2	Both- 9
	36-40 yrs- 3	Blackburn- 1	
		Whitburn- 1	
		East Calder- 1	
		Broxburn- 1	

More males were consulted by the research than females; nine as compared to five.

⁶ Plus one brief discussion with a member of the CDPS team who was about to leave their post and could not take part in a full telephone interview

The majority of students (six) consulted were aged 31-35 years.

Most of the students consulted lived in Livingston (five), Armadale (three) and Blackridge (two).

The majority of students consulted (nine) had been referred for both drug and alcohol problems.

Potential students

In practice, it did not prove possible to interview many potential students.

The means of identifying potential students was through service providers, most of whom stated that they had previously told all suitable clients about the programme and those interested had already self-referred. Only two service providers were able to identify three clients⁷, between them, who they regarded as potential students, however, none of these clients came forward to be interviewed.

GIG allows former students who have not completed the programme to take part in a future course if desired, therefore, such students meet the criteria of being potential students. Two such potential students accepted the invitation to be interviewed.

Due to the small number of these interviewees, views which comment on sensitive issues will be reported together with the past GIG students in order to protect anonymity. Potential students' views on: barriers to employment, education and training, reasons for non-completion, views on taking part on GIG in the future and any practical barriers to participating are included as separate sections as these topics were asked about only in the face-to-face interviews.

4.4 GIG postal questionnaire to service providers

In order to investigate lower than anticipated referral rates, WLDAS/GIG designed and sent their own postal questionnaire to all agencies who have referred or have clients who have self-referred to GIG. The purpose of the survey was also to identify the number of potential students who might be referred to GIG. The questionnaire was sent out in January 2003 prior to commencement of this research and investigated, among other things, the numbers of ex- and stabilised drug and alcohol users and length of time they had been stabilised.

Briefly, the results of the postal questionnaire were as follows.

- Nine completed questionnaires were received from agencies including: the CDPS, the SWDT, the 'North Group Children and Families Practice

⁷ This could be due to variations in understanding of 'stabilised' and student suitability for the course amongst service providers. GIG, have however, provided their definitions of stabilised and criterion for student suitability to referrers

Teams, Penumbra, the West Lothian Council Mental Health Team, the WLDAS Counselling Service and Jobcentres.

- Service providers identified over 300 clients aged 16-40 years with whom they were currently working.
- 158 current clients were identified by agencies as 'stable' for the periods shown in table 5 below.

0-1 weeks	2-4 weeks	5-8 weeks	9-12 weeks	3-6 months	7-12 months	> 12 months	Total
37	22	27	16	28	21	7	158

- 47 of these clients were identified as unemployed, although 16 of these were described as unsuitable for GIG for a variety of reasons including that they: were in prison, were agoraphobic or that they had already been on a GIG course or had declined to take part in GIG.
- In total 31⁸ current, stable, unemployed clients in the 16-40 age range were identified by service providers via the postal questionnaire in January 2003.

A. VIEWS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

4.5 Knowledge of the GIG programme

The majority of service providers describe GIG as an 'employability' and confidence-building programme. Two service providers said that the programme enhances social and work skills, two that it helps people moving forward and one service provider mentioned each of the following: the IT component of the course, that it helps ex- drug users develop a routine, has discussion groups, provides students with something to do with their time, provides work placements, encourages motivation and sets goals.

4.6 Hearing about the GIG programme

Four service providers (14%) had heard about the GIG programme verbally from the staff at WLDAS, either during a meeting at the WLDAS offices or at the referring agency's premises. Two service providers said that WLDAS had sent information on the programme out to them. Two of the service providers had been told about the programme by a colleague.

⁸ It should be noted that it cannot be assumed that all of these 31 were available and suitable for GIG as the questionnaire did not ask about whether these clients were in prison, had mental health problems which would prohibit them taking part or whether they had already been on/declined to take part in the GIG programme. This information was volunteered by one organisation and 16 out of 25 possible current clients were rendered unsuitable for the GIG programme due to these factors

One service provider is part of the WLDAS team already as a counsellor and heard about the new programme in this capacity.

4.7 Information about the GIG programme

Seven service providers (78%) felt that they had sufficient information on the referral criteria. The other two service providers had previously felt that they not had enough information; of these, one had found the changes to the programme content and referral criteria quite confusing. However, this had been remedied for each by a face-to-face meeting with the GIG team.

The majority (78%) of service providers were happy with the information they had on the programme content and aims. One other service provider felt that they would like some more information on the content although the information they had on the aims was fine.

4.8 Views on the referral system

The referral system works by service providers informing clients about the GIG programme. Clients then self-refer or the service provider refers them with their agreement⁹.

All nine of the service providers who were asked (100%) were satisfied with the referral system. Two service providers complimented the GIG team on being quick to respond to referrals and another two said that the system is simple:

- *“The referral system is ok, they respond quite quickly.”*
- *“The referral system is quite simple and straightforward. It doesn’t take ages to do, which is less off-putting than some others.”*

Two service providers commented that improvements had been made in terms of feedback on clients. Formerly GIG did not update service providers on client progress and only informed them if a client dropped out of the programme. They now send referrers feedback charts which are appreciated¹⁰.

4.9 Numbers of clients referred to GIG

Agencies varied in the numbers of clients that they had referred to the GIG programme, shown in table 6 below. In total, 50 clients were reported as being referred by agencies to GIG. Two agencies had given clients information about GIG but these clients had not gone on to self-refer (see column three).

⁹ Hereafter, ‘referred’ will cover both the processes of client self-referral and referral by a service provider

¹⁰ GIG have stated that they would also appreciate feedback/updates on how referrer’s clients are doing and to be alerted to any potential problems that referrers can identify

Table 6: Numbers of clients referred to GIG			
Agency	No. of clients referred/self-referred	No. of clients informed about GIG but not referred	Total
SWDT	6	-	6
Penumbra	2	1	3
CDPS	24	-	24
CPNs	6	5	11
ELCA	4	-	4
WLDAS	8	-	8
	50	6	56

4.10 Outcomes for the clients referred

According to service providers, a mixed picture emerged of their clients' experiences of the programme.

Positive aspects of the programme

Service providers outlined a variety of positive experiences and reported that their clients had valued the following aspects of the GIG programme (the numbers of service providers who said this are shown in brackets):

- the content: art, leisure activities, alternative therapies, some of the outings and the IT (3)
- the voluntary work placements (2)
- meeting people (which reduced social isolation) and the group interaction (2)
- the programme had improved their social skills and built confidence (2)
- the programme had provided an opportunity to do new things (2)
- practical help such as the free bus pass and having driving lessons funded by GIG (1)
- the programme had been useful (1)
- GIG staff had been supportive in trying to rebuild client self-esteem (1)

Negative aspects of the programme

Service providers outlined the following negative perceptions about the GIG programme (the numbers of service providers who said this are shown in brackets):

- the group dynamic of programme was perceived to be not appropriate or was difficult for some clients (6)
- some clients had been 'unfairly' excluded from the programme due to personality clashes with other students or with staff (3)

- the reasons for excluding had not been appropriately investigated by the GIG team prior to exclusions being made (2)
- perceived staff lack of experience of dealing with substance misusers¹¹ (2)
- one client disliked the name of the programme and its association with ‘gear’ as the slang term for drugs (1)
- insufficient motivation of students by the staff (1)
- lack of opportunity to discuss previous substance misuse within programme¹² (1)
- patronising attitude of a staff member towards students (1)
- unrealistic expectations by staff for clients to be fully functioning students (1)

The service providers who felt that their clients had been ‘unfairly’ excluded commented that they had become cautious about referring more clients to the programme.

4.11 Views of service providers on the programme

The service providers consulted expressed the following views on the GIG programme:

- this type of programme is challenging to run
- achieving the optimum service is a process of revising the programme which takes time
- the programme has improved since its inception and feedback and response to feedback have improved
- the importance of the GIG programme in meeting a need for this type of service in West Lothian
- a desire to see the programme continuing and being successful

For example:

- *“It will take a while to get the project right. It’s good to keep adapting it until they are happy with it.”*
- *“There are far too few ways we have of supporting people who are doing well; programmes like this are important.”*

One service provider felt that there was a gap in service provision for clients who needed a more individually-focused employment programme: *‘There is a gap in service provision for clients who need individual help with employment. There’s nowhere to refer them to currently.’*

¹¹ GIG emphasise that the programme is not a drug programme but aimed at helping students gain skills for moving on in life

¹² GIG feel that this type of support is not within the remit of the programme that they offer

Some of the service providers consulted identified these issues in relation to problems with the GIG programme:

- there is a need for more individual sessions/one-to-one support
- there is a lack advertising of the programme
- there have been incidences of people buying and selling drugs at GIG course venue (view of one referrer)

4.12 Views on why referral rates to the programme are lower than expected

The service providers consulted, made the following suggestions as to why referral rates to the GIG programme may have been lower than expected:

Client stability

- there were not enough suitable clients when they were required to be stable for 3 months¹³
- there were not enough stabilised clients in general

Client issues

- not all clients are unemployed; many people with drug and alcohol problems still have jobs
- alcohol using clients can usually find a job quite easily once sober
- there were fewer appropriate clients than had been originally estimated by WLDAS

Practical barriers

- some clients needed to be referred at a particular point and the programme starting dates used to be a barrier to this
- programme was initially only for ex-drug users then opened up to include ex-alcohol users
- the age restriction is a barrier for alcohol clients, many of whom are aged 40+
- the programme does not lend itself to offenders joining (the service provider who said this did not specify why this was the case)

Programme content

- the programme was initially very employability focused; clients needed more basic support
- few clients are ready to do employability course
- some clients don't like the idea of the programme

Group programme

- the group situation is difficult for some clients

¹³ This requirement has now changed to service providers being able to refer clients who: would not need to use non-prescription drugs during the day of the programme, could function effectively and would attend the programme regularly

- working on an individual basis is more constructive for drug users; the group setting doesn't really work

One service provider said that as their clients are all 'connected'; if some have a poor opinion of the programme they pass this view onto other clients. This service provider has found that when they mentioned the GIG programme to such clients they are not interested in participating. This service provider also reported that in general there is a low opinion of GIG amongst their clients which may have contributed to low referral rates.

A few service providers expressed the following reservations about referring recently stable clients to the GIG programme in case others in the group encouraged them to relapse:

- *"In a group it's difficult to stop drug talk and everyone is at different stages of coming off drugs."*
- *"Others may lead stable clients astray, especially recently stable ones. The group situation might not be beneficial for all clients in terms of staying off drugs."*

Some service providers (three) reiterated that the fact they had felt some clients had been 'unfairly' excluded may have contributed to lower referral rates. A disagreement between GIG and another referring agency over feedback was also said to have affected that organisation's referral rates.

Some of the service providers (four) felt that perhaps not all referrers have sufficient updated information on GIG, which may have contributed to the lower referral rates; and that GIG is not well advertised:

- *"Some referrers need more information on the programme, people are busy and there's little time to catch up with new developments."*
- *"I'm not sure if all referrers know of the programme, I've not seen any posters."*

Although service providers felt that there were some improvements that could be made to the programme to increase referral rates, the majority commented that the changes that GIG had already made were likely to increase uptake:

- *"The three-day programme may increase uptake; the initial five-day programme was a big commitment."*
- *"The rolling programme is a good change. I think it will increase referrals and it's better for clients to be referred when they are ready."*
- *"The changes to the programme have been good; they will make it a more accessible service for referrers and clients."*
- *"GIG have made the right changes, it's just not an easy client group and it's a difficult programme to run."*

4.13 Views on how referrals rates might be increased

The service providers consulted, suggest the following ways in which referral rates to the GIG programme could be increased:

- employ workers experienced in working with drug users who can carry out relapse prevention work for recently stabilised clients
- send out leaflets to particular referrers as some are unclear about the exact remit of GIG
- hold an 'open afternoon' on the GIG programme and its aims
- hold more regular meetings to update referrers on changes (one referrer did not know about the new definition of stabilised)
- provide a printout of programme content for referrers and clients
- improve communication between the CDPS and GIG; if a client becomes unstable let CDPS know quickly
- assist students in making good childcare arrangements
- increase the age limit of students

4.14 Barriers to clients participating in or completing the GIG programme

The service providers consulted identified the following reasons why some of their clients might not participate in or complete the GIG programme:

Staff issues

- a perceived lack of staff experience in working with drug users
- the attitude of some staff was perceived to be 'patronising' based on feedback from some students
- a view that serious students would be put off when they saw staff not being able to deal with or recognise issues with the less stable students¹⁴

Client issues

- variable stability levels and relapse
- socialising with past networks of people using drugs/alcohol and relapsing
- lack of motivation
- not being at right stage
- mental health problems
- feeling their drug habit is more serious than others and that other students did not have same issues
- inappropriateness of GIG for particular types of people e.g. those who have lots of confidence and those who have too 'adolescent' an attitude
- difficulty in committing to attending the programme
- some people with alcohol problems might not want to take part in a programme with drug users

¹⁴ GIG deal with serious issues with the student in private and other students may not necessarily be aware that a matter has been dealt with

- sometimes clients are reluctant to go to another agency after engaging with one

Practical issues

- content unappealing to some clients
- insufficient public transport in West Lothian

4.15 Views on how participation/completion might be increased

The service providers consulted offered the following suggestions of ways to increase participation in, and completion of, the GIG programme:

- incorporate a 'group therapy' component at the start of the programme with trained drugs counsellors¹⁵
- run a pre-GIG programme with group counselling to help prepare for the main programme
- provide more individual sessions and one-to-one support as some people find group situations difficult
- devise and implement a set protocol for exclusion¹⁶
- ensure prospective students have a clear understanding of what the programme is about¹⁷
- provide clients with support in drug issues; have someone on the GIG team who can be approached with drug issues
- offer paid employment placements as well as voluntary work ones
- offer greater flexibility of course lengths and levels (although it would have to be clear for referrers what the different criteria were)
- make the programme more challenging by increasing difficulty gradually
- base students in West Lothian College so they can be 'normal' students
- promote the programme by students who have completed it giving a talk to potential students
- run workshops or drop-in sessions for potential students to promote the programme
- review literature on programme retention and ensure that all the suggested strategies are being employed
- inform non-completing students that they can repeat the course in the future

¹⁵ GIG feel that due to small team and occasional staff shortages it would not have been possible to offer this within the programme

¹⁶ GIG have a set protocol for exclusion and students sign a contract clarifying rules and boundaries before going on the programme

¹⁷ GIG feel that they do this already both in writing and by giving out leaflets during prospective students' assessment

B. VIEWS OF POTENTIAL STUDENTS

4.16 Barriers to work, education and/or training for potential students

Two potential students, who had dropped out of a GIG programme, were asked what they felt were the barriers they faced in getting work, education and/or training. The responses given are detailed below (number of respondents in brackets):

- other people's attitudes and prejudices towards former drug users (2), for example: *"People don't trust junkies, I don't even trust junkies."*
- lack of confidence to look for a job or attend a job interview (1)
- being unable to understand and fill in application forms due to low literacy levels (1)
- having to lie about previous drug use on job application forms (1)
- problems with childcare (1)

4.17 Reasons for non-completion

Both students had only attended their previous GIG courses for a short time; one was on the 'First Gear' programme and had only taken part for a few days the other had been on GIG for three weeks. They cited different reasons for non-completion. One was due to clashes with a staff member, the other was due to the student's partner at the time being unsupportive.

4.18 Views on taking part in GIG in the future

During the small number of face-to-face interviews with the potential (previous) GIG students, a member of the GIG team described the changes to the programme. Both interviewees were very positive about repeating the GIG programme and said that they intended to do so and described themselves as stabilised. One had been sent a leaflet by GIG detailing the new programme which she thought sounded even better than the previous programme she had attended.

The other potential student commented that the new GIG programme sounded interesting apart from the arts and crafts component which she had not enjoyed previously. Both students were flexible about when they could attend the course, although one felt that mornings might be easier for them.

4.19 Practical barriers to participation

One of the students had previously experienced difficulty with public transport to the GIG venue as the buses into Livingston were infrequent from their area. They felt this could be resolved by a member of their family giving them a lift by car.

C. VIEWS OF CURRENT AND PREVIOUS STUDENTS

4.20 Ways found out about programme

The fourteen students who took part in the research identified various agencies/people from whom they had found out about the GIG programme:

- drug and alcohol counsellor (6)
- GP (2)
- CDPS (1)
- social worker (1)
- psychiatrist (1)
- West Lothian Council (1)

Most of the students had been told about the programme by the above source and had then self-referred to GIG.

4.21 Reasons for taking part in the programme

The students consulted identified various factors which had prompted them to take part in the programme:

Providing structure and 'normality'

- to see what 'everyday' people did
- to take the first steps towards a 'normal' life
- to have something to look forward to
- to have a routine

Learning new skills and getting a job

- to learn something
- to get a job at the end of it
- to undertake a challenge

Improving social life

- to improve communication skills
- to rebuild confidence
- to experience being in a group
- to meet new people

4.22 Most useful aspects of the programme

The students who participated in the research felt that the main factors which had overall made the programme useful for them related to improving their social life and building their confidence, providing them with structure/alleviating boredom, helping them to stay off drugs and alcohol and providing them with opportunities to pursue work and education.

Improving social life

- *“GIG gets you out of the house.”*
- *“It lets you mingle with people.”*
- *“The programme gave me confidence.”*
- *“It helped my timekeeping and communication.”*

Providing structure/alleviating boredom

- *“GIG gives you a new routine.”*
- *“It stops you being bored.”*
- *“It gives you something to do.”*
- *“It was something to look forward to. I felt down when the GIG programme ended.”*
- *“GIG helps you let off steam when through the activities”*

Helping refrain from substance abuse

- *“The course helped me stay away from temptation.”*
- *“The programme helped me keep off too much alcohol.”*
- *“My lifestyle has improved since GIG.”*

Providing further opportunities for work/education

- *“GIG can open a lot of doors.”*
- *“GIG helped me do things I wouldn’t have dreamed of.”*
- *“The GIG staff took me to the meeting for my work placement and supported me through it.”*
- *“The GIG programme contributed to paying for my driving lessons which will help me get a job.”*
- *“GIG gave me normality and a placement in voluntary work.”*
- *“If I hadn’t been on the programme, I wouldn’t be thinking about college.”*
- *“The course helps you get to college or to get a job.”*
- *“I can’t fault it, it’s been really helpful.”*

4.23 Positive and negative views on the GIG programme

There were a variety of things that students consulted liked and disliked about the programme or found useful or not so useful. The figures in brackets indicate the number of students who said this.

What students liked about the programme

- staff (9)
- content (9)
- talks by visiting organisations (6)
- practical help: childcare, free bus pass and other assistance (5)
- drop-in (2)
- group approach (1)

These are described in more detail below.

Staff

Most of the GIG team were seen by nine of the students consulted as approachable, friendly and helpful. *“I felt could speak to them privately if needed to. The drop-in is a good way of doing that.”* Another two members of staff were also praised: *“[Name and name] are great, they are really understanding and you can go to them about anything.”*

Content

The majority of students who took part in the research praised the overall content of the GIG programme, saying that it had been useful for them. One student praised the way the course was structured: *“they break it all down into chunks for you”* and felt this approach made the material easier to absorb.

Most of the students reported enjoying the computing course and said they had got a lot out of it. Some students said they had very much valued being taught how to use the internet and to set up and use e-mail.

One student particularly liked the hypnotherapy and massage. Others found that the work placements and help filling in application forms had been extremely useful.

Talks by visiting organisations

Students in all three focus groups mentioned that the ACAS talk on when convictions were spent had been useful for them.

Similarly students had valued the representative from the ‘Advice Shop’ coming to talk to them.

Practical help

- Childcare: a few students with children commented that the arrangements for childcare via GIG were helpful and made it possible for them to take part
- Bus-pass, taxi, lunches: several of the students who took part in the research mentioned that practical assistance offered by GIG such as the bus pass or a taxi to the course and lunch being provided were all helpful financially and were a good idea.

- Other assistance: two students commented that the GIG team were always ready to help with practical issues the students needed assistance with such as applying for state benefits and state loans, organising and jointly paying for driving lessons, job applications and CVs in addition to these being sometimes covered in the course content.

Drop-in

Several of the students consulted mentioned that they particularly liked the drop-in sessions, as a way of approaching a member of the team individually whilst on the course and because of the associated flexibility. The drop-in is also open to students who had completed the course which some students particularly valued and had made use of: *"It is good that you can still go back to GIG through the drop-in."* Another student said: *"I'm doing open learning and I feel I can ask GIG staff for help."*

Group approach of programme

A former, potential student commented that although they had found being in a group situation intimidating, that this was overall a good approach.

What students did not like about the programme

- staff not being trained drugs counsellors (8)
- staff approach (7)
- other students still using/talking about drugs (6)
- length and rate of the course (6)
- not being encouraged to discuss drug/alcohol background (5)
- content: computing (4) and arts and crafts (4), one of these students did not enjoy either the arts and crafts or the computing
- insufficient counselling and support (2)
- child not insured in crèche when parent out on activity days (1)
- atmosphere (1)

Staff not being trained drugs counsellors

Students who raised this identified the lack of experience of most of the staff in dealing with people who have drug or alcohol abuse and the associated problems. This was a particular issue when increased support or understanding were required on coming off and staying off drugs or alcohol. Students reported that they were more likely to go to the member of staff who did have experience in this area to discuss problems

Staff approach

In contrast to the positive comments on staff, seven of the students consulted said that they disliked the approach of a particular member of the GIG staff. Issues raised about one member of staff were:

- a patronising attitude
- lack of experience and therefore approachability with regard to drugs and alcohol misuse
- insensitivity about low literacy

- lack of communication about a course date change

This staff member's approach was felt by a number of students to have led to others dropping out of the course.

However, there were also positive comments about this staff member including: *"The staff were very approachable, particularly [name]."*

Other students still using/talking about drugs

One student recounted an incident where another student had used heroin in the toilets and thought that the staff knew about this but they did not do anything. The student disliked it when another student talked about marijuana as they were trying not to use the drug themselves and felt vulnerable about restarting if it was highlighted in this way.

Several students in focus groups commented that some other students on the course had still been using drugs or had their dealer come to outside the GIG venue to sell drugs. They found this situation particularly difficult as some were feeling vulnerable about their own resistance to drugs and trying hard to remain stable and resist temptation.

Length and rate of course

Several of the students who participated in the research felt that the 8-week course was too short and that a 12-week course would be more beneficial. *"I was just getting into it and then it stopped."* One student similarly felt that the course had moved too fast and he had felt rushed.

Not being encouraged to discuss drug/alcohol background

Most of the students consulted raised the fact that they felt they would have liked an opportunity to talk about their recent history and their drug or alcohol habit. A few would like to have talked about this during the first week and then to have moved on to the other aspects of the course. Some students commented that it felt strange as they were all at GIG due to this common factor but that it was never mentioned. Further to this, one student felt that there had not been as much counselling and support as they had expected and another that it would be helpful to work through any problems with a member of staff trained to help¹⁸.

Content

Students liked the overall content of the GIG course, however, a minority said that they had not enjoyed particular parts of the course. Four of the students consulted had disliked the computing course, one because their special needs made it difficult for them and the others because they had found computing hard to learn. The student with the special needs had needed more support than they had received in order to be able to tackle the course. Three or four students disliked the arts and crafts part of the course.

¹⁸ GIG's response to this view is outlined in the summary

Two students who took part in the research criticised the way choosing leisure activities had been organised as they felt this led to arguments and lack of agreement within the group. They suggested that a list of options chosen by the GIG team should be presented to students who would then vote on them. Two students did not like the graffiti art aspect of the course.

Child not insured in crèche

One student parent mentioned that she had felt anxious whilst attending the activity days as her child was not insured at the crèche during this time¹⁹.

Atmosphere

One student felt that the programme had a school-like atmosphere, especially initially, and that the approach of the member of staff previously mentioned contributed greatly to this. They had felt '*on-the-spot*' and uncomfortable on the first few days and had found the programme different to what they had expected. No other students said this and one student during the same focus group disagreed with this students saying that the atmosphere had not been as much like school as he might have expected.

4.24 Ways to improve GIG programme

Students were asked about how the GIG programme could be improved. The following suggestions were made by students:

Changes to staff

- employ staff from a drugs/alcohol counselling background
- provide more counselling and support from GIG team on substance-related issues

Increase provision of information

- provide more detailed information on course content at the start
- set the agenda for the day in the morning
- provide information on benefits

Changes to content/structure

- employer/someone from college to visit and give talk
- longer work placements
- increase length of programme to 12-16 weeks
- increase numbers of students completing programme
- provide opportunities to discuss drug/alcohol background
- introduce full day activity outings
- provide flexibility over taking part in particular course content
- provide trips away at start or end of programme

¹⁹ Due to this issue, GIG stopped using the crèche concerned

Changes to staff

In relation to improvements in staffing, students in two focus groups suggested that an ex- drug or alcohol user would be a valuable addition to the team as they would really understand the issues faced by the students. They also felt at least one member of staff from a drugs/alcohol counselling background was necessary to provide trained support where needed.

Changes to content/structure

Regarding the length of the programme, most students felt that an eight-week programme was too short and that a 12-16 week programme would be far better. The students who were on the rolling programme also felt the programme could be too short as they were taught in 8-week blocks and then the GIG team decided whether or not they needed to continue. The students would prefer to decide themselves if they would like to carry on with the programme or not.

Two students felt that as they did not like arts and crafts the course would be improved for them if another activity could be organised to take place at the same time to provide them with a choice.

One student, who enjoyed the course content, felt they did not always understand why they were doing some tasks and would welcome more explanation of the aims of a particular activity.

One student felt that an organised group trip away either near the start of the programme to help break the ice or to celebrate the end of the programme would be a good thing to do in terms of promoting group cohesion.

Increase provision of information

One student felt that they would like more detailed information on the content at the start of the course. Students in a separate focus group put forward a different view saying that a member of staff had gone over the course content with each of them for an hour on the first day. Similarly another student felt he often did not know what they were going on a particular day and would like the team to inform them of this in the morning, however, the other students in the focus group disagreed with this and said that the staff already do this.

4.25 General comments on GIG

Positive comments

The students consulted made the following general positive comments about the GIG programme:

- *“I got a lot out of GIG.”*
- *“GIG improved my view on life in general.”*
- *“I have nothing bad at all to say about GIG.”*
- *“I think it’s brilliant.”*
- *“The course is good.”*

Other comments

Some students who took part in the research also raised the following general issues in relation to GIG:

- not knowing what to expect from the programme prior to starting it
- views on whether students needed to be stabilised in order to take part in GIG
- the holiday break interrupts the flow of the programme
- becoming dependent on the course
- there having been improvements in the programme since it started
- being in the minority in the group as an alcohol user was not a problem

Not knowing what to expect of the programme

This was a fairly common view voiced by approximately five of the students consulted.

Whether students should be stabilised in order to participate in GIG

Several students commented that you needed to be stable to take part in the GIG course to get the most out of it. By contrast, two students in other focus groups felt that even if a person had a bit of a drug habit the programme could still work for them as long as they really wanted to do the programme and they were at a certain level of functioning²⁰.

Holiday break interrupts flow of programme

All the students in one focus group said that they had found the break in the course a particular problem as it broke the momentum of their new routine and structure. They said they had been bored during the holidays and had lapsed back into 'dabbling' in drugs.

Becoming dependent on the course

Two students in a focus group said that they enjoyed the course so much and it provided them with a structure and a new way of life that they felt they could get 'dependent' on the course and were apprehensive about how they would fare in relation to drugs when the structure of being on the course ended.

Improvements in the course over time

One student who had been on two separate GIG courses commented that the programme has improved over time.

Minority of students who had only used alcohol on course

The majority of GIG students are ex- or stabilised drug users although a small number have misused alcohol and some have misused both. Those who had only used alcohol were asked during the focus groups whether how they felt

²⁰ GIG feel that a certain level of stability/being 'stabilised' is required from students in order for them to retain information about the course content and be able to keep appointments etc.

about being in the minority; both students said that they had not felt that this was an issue.

4.26 Drop-out rates

Students consulted during the focus groups reported that in total 21 of their fellow students had dropped out of the programme.

Those who had completed the programme were asked about what they felt were the reasons for other students dropping out. Various suggestions were given including that other students:

- weren't ready
- were still using drugs/alcohol
- the programme doesn't suit some people
- found it too difficult to juggle childcare
- the student did not fit in and course was too basic for them

When asked about this one student said: *"I don't know why people would drop out of this course, I think it's great!"*

4.27 Ways to attract more students

Students were asked about their views on how GIG could attract more students to take part in the programme. They expressed a rich variety of suggestions of ways the course organisers could increase participation including:

Improving advertising

- advertising in: **all** health centres, the CDPS, drug centres, the 'Advice Shop', 'West Lothian Connected' in the Almondvale Centre, job centres, Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) offices, police stations and chemists
- putting leaflets about GIG through doors
- GPs could describe the programme to relevant patients²¹
- CDPS counsellors could tell all appropriate clients about the programme
- word of mouth by other students who have taken part

Improving communication

- taking steps to improve communication between the CDPS and the GIG team

One student felt that the communication between the two organisations was not as good as it could be and that this might be reducing the number of CDPS clients taking part in the GIG programme.

²¹ GIG assert that all GP practices in West Lothian were written to and informed about the programme

Improving information

- providing a more detailed course content outline and displaying this at key sites (listed above)
- reassuring prospective students that participating in the course will not affect their state benefits and putting this on the referral form/leaflet about GIG

Offering incentives

Two students in one of the focus groups suggested that providing an incentive of a £25 supermarket voucher at the end of the programme could increase the numbers of students completing the course. All four students in another focus group agreed that a financial incentive would help encourage completion and that this could take the form of a voucher for clothes, perhaps for job interviews. They felt that they struggle on benefits and any financial support is always of great help. However, all (five) students in the remaining focus group strongly disagreed with this view as they felt that such financial incentives would provide the wrong type of motivation for completing the course. GIG students already receive a certificate on completion and have a bus pass and free lunches during the programme, which they felt was sufficient incentive. They also held the view that GIG students should complete the programme for themselves.

One group of students expressed surprise that the participation levels in the course are low as they know of several people (seven) who strongly wish to take part. They said that there is a waiting list to go on the GIG programme.

4.28 Activities since GIG

Students who had completed the programme were asked about their lives since GIG. Two of them said that they were still in contact with and receiving help from the GIG staff. One had approached GIG to help him fill in forms to apply to college and the other had asked a member of staff to write a character reference for the police, which they said had helped greatly.

As outlined before, several former students still visit and receive support from the GIG team via the drop-in sessions.

Two students were still in the voluntary work arranged by GIG and another was at college.

Only one former student said that, unfortunately, they were bored at home and not in a job or college after completing the GIG programme.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The intended outcomes of the research were that it would identify ways to increase referral to, take-up and completion of the Getting into Gear programme. Consultation with service providers, who refer to GIG, has provided a large number of suggestions on ways to increase these rates and comments on why referral rates may have been lower than initially anticipated by WLDAS.

It was also intended that the research could be used to market the service to new potential students by a member of the GIG team attending the interview and describing an outline of the programme and to identify the numbers of potential GIG students in West Lothian. Furthermore it was hoped that process of carrying out the research would lead to greater awareness and take-up of the GIG service amongst potential students.

Overall, students and service providers gave positive feedback on the GIG programme.

All of the current and past students consulted said that they had enjoyed the GIG programme and particularly appreciated the structure it provided within their lives. Some past students had moved on in life as a result of the programme, and are now in work placements or further education. Although some of the students consulted raised negative issues in relation to staff, staff were also praised for being approachable and friendly by other students.

The two potential students consulted expressed enthusiasm about taking part in the GIG programme again and both commented that they intended to do so.

Overall, the service providers consulted felt that the GIG programme was an important service within West Lothian and the majority said that they would like it to continue. It was important to several service providers to have a programme to which they could refer clients who were doing well in abstaining from substance abuse.

5.1 Potential students for the programme

Marketing GIG to potential students

Unfortunately the research could not be used to market the programme to a wider audience, due to the small number of potential students who came forward to be interviewed. It is hoped, however, that the telephone interviews with service providers may have highlighted the GIG programme, and its aims and content, to less frequent referrers.

Numbers of potential students

Only three potential students for GIG, who had not already been referred, were identified by service providers. Two previous students, out of nineteen²² who had not completed the course, came forward to be interviewed as potential students, making a total of approximately 22 potential students for GIG.

5.2 Reasons why take-up may be lower than anticipated

Service providers

Service providers identified a variety of reasons why the number of students being referred to and completing the GIG programme may be lower than anticipated. In summary these were:

- some clients with mental health problems do not wish to take part
- some clients with alcohol problems are above the age 40 limit
- some clients are uncomfortable about being in a group situation
- some service providers do not feel they have enough information on course content and revisions
- there were insufficient numbers of stabilised clients
- some clients are already employed (perhaps more than were estimated by GIG)
- the course was initially very employment-focused, which was beyond the majority of clients at the time
- some service providers are wary of referring 'vulnerable', recently stabilised clients to a group programme
- some clients were not ready for the programme at that stage of their life

Students

GIG students identified some reasons why they thought other students had left the course:

- issues with GIG staff
- not being ready for the programme
- relapse
- change in life circumstances, such as a partner coming out of jail who was unsupportive of the programme

5.3 Ways take-up could be improved

Service providers suggested a variety of ways in which the take-up and referral rates to the GIG programme could be improved. In summary these were:

- employ staff experienced in dealing with substance-abusing clients
- provide detailed information on the GIG programme to referrers

²² It should be noted that these nineteen non-completing students may or may not still meet the requirement criteria for GIG

- promote the programme to potential students through talks by a previous student
- re-introduce a pre-programme similar to 'First Gear' which would prepare some clients for the main programme or for clients who require a more basic programme
- offer a more individually-tailored programme with an increased opportunity for personal support for students
- improve communication and the relationship between the GIG team and some service providers

GIG/WLDAS have given their feedback on the comments made by students and service providers in this report. It should be noted that they feel that many of these comments and suggestions on the GIG programme may reflect confusion about the programme's aims, the remit of the programme and what the programme can realistically achieve.

5.4 Changes to the programme and views on these

WLDAS have recently made three main changes to the GIG programme:

- introducing a rolling programme
- revising the definition of 'stabilised'
- changing the content of the programme to make it less employment-focused and concentrating more on general skills useful to the workplace such as confidence-building.

Most of these changes have been very much appreciated by the majority of referrers.

Rolling programme

Eight of the nine referrers consulted felt that the rolling programme was a welcome improvement as it meant that they could refer a client when appropriate for the client, rather than having to wait for the next start date. In contrast two referrers did not think the rolling programme was a good idea; one because they thought it might be disruptive to students already on the course and felt that clients prepare for the programme through having to wait. The other service provider thought this change would make the programme more difficult for GIG to organise but would be beneficial for their clients.

Revised definition of 'stabilised'

The majority of service providers (six) felt that relaxing the period of time for which a client had to be stabilised had been a good change, as they could now refer more clients. Three service providers did not comment on this change. One service provider, however, said that they had not been informed about the revised definition by GIG.

Revised programme content

Four service providers commented that changes to the GIG programme had been a positive step as this was appropriate for a wider group of clients than a very employment-focused programme. For example, one service provider said: *“Before, it was very employability-focused and the length of time people had to be stable for meant there were not enough stabilised clients to refer. My clients needed more basic support. Now that GIG are doing more confidence-building, there are more people who are suitable for the programme.”* The other service providers made no comment on this change.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall finding of the research is that the GIG programme provides a valuable service within West Lothian, which is in general appreciated by the majority of students and service providers who use the service. Particular recommendations in relation to how the programme could be improved, improving information and ways to attract more students are outlined below.

6.1 The ‘Getting into Gear’ programme

In planning or revising the GIG programme, WLDAS should give consideration to the following actions:

Staff

- when employing future staff, recruit those experienced in working with people who misuse drugs or alcohol
- look at ways of providing further training to existing staff on the issues involved with working with people who misuse drugs or alcohol
- the negative staff issues identified in this report should be discussed with the relevant staff and appropriate action taken

Approach

- provide more counselling and support for students on drug or alcohol related issues for students, as required, during the programme
- offer a more individually tailored programme for students, where required, whilst continuing to run the course as a group programme
- provide opportunities for students to discuss their drug or alcohol use as a group at the start of the programme
- design and implement a set protocol for the exclusion of students
- investigate ways of reducing or managing personality clashes between students
- investigate the issue of students becoming ‘dependent’ on the programme and find ways of continuing to support students once they have completed the programme

Content

- provide increased support to some students during the computing component of the programme, such as those with special needs or those who need more help to master computing skills
- where possible, provide a choice of alternative activities for students

Practical changes

- extend the length of the programme from eight to twelve weeks
- run the programme without a holiday break in order to preserve continuity
- investigate the need for increasing the age limit for the programme in order to make it accessible to older clients
- look into whether GIG students would prefer to be based within West Lothian college and the practicality of this option

Providing information

- provide more detailed information on the course content, referral criteria and changes to the definition of stabilised to the appropriate service providers
- hold 'open afternoons' on the new GIG programme or more regular update meetings for all relevant service providers
- provide students with a more detailed course outline at the start of the programme by the GIG team
- involve previous GIG students in promoting the programme to potential students (identified by referrers) by giving an informal presentation on the course

Attracting more students

- advertise in the following locations to attract more students, if they do not already: all health centres, the CDPS offices, drug centres, job centres, the 'Health Education Board for Scotland' offices, police stations, chemists, the 'Advice Shop' and 'West Lothian Connected' in the Almondvale Centre
- promote GIG by distributing leaflets to domestic premises, perhaps targeting those areas known to have higher proportions of drug or alcohol using residents
- ask GPs to describe the programme to relevant patients, if this is not done already
- improve communication between GIG and the
- referring agency with whom there have been disagreements in the past

6.2 Dissemination

It is recommended that:

- this report is disseminated, in a suitable format, to all the service providers who gave their views

- a summary of this report is sent to all the fourteen students who took part in this research and a copy of the full report made available at the GIG offices for interested students to consult, perhaps during the drop-in sessions

***Amanda Carty and Clare Lardner
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