



A – Z Introductory Guide to Health and Social Care

Drug Misuse

Brief description

People who have drug misuse problems will, in many cases, have a range of other difficulties in their lives including problems with housing, family relationships, employment, offending behaviour and debt. This means that a wide range of responses and support may be necessary to address those problems. Drug use is often one of a number of problems that need to be resolved.

Background

Illicit drug use continues to be a problem in Scotland, as it is in other parts of the UK and Europe. Issues associated with the misuse of drugs give rise to health problems, for example, the transmission of communicable diseases (Hepatitis, HIV), injecting related injuries and premature death. Other problems are more social in nature and involve issues such as increases in acquisitive crime, prostitution, unemployment, family breakdown and homelessness. Different types of drugs are known to cause different sets of issues for users.

National Policy

Drugs in Scotland: Meeting the Challenge - Report of Ministerial Drugs Task Force: (1994)

This report was the result of a comprehensive review of the efforts to tackle drug misuse in Scotland by the Drugs Task Force, led by Lord Fraser. The report contained a number of recommendations, including setting up Drug Action Teams, and a committee on tackling drug misuse in Scotland.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents4/dis-00.htm>

Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership (1999)

This strategy sets out an analysis of a response to Scotland's drugs problems. The strategy establishes the four pillar approach of action addressing young people, treatment, availability and communities.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w7/tdis-00.htm>

Integrated Care for Drug Users: Principles and Practice (2002)

Provides information and support to DATs and partner agencies in the planning, design and delivery of integrated care for drug users and to service providers, managers and practitioners who are delivering services to people with drug misuse problems.

<http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu/intcare/intcare.htm>

Hidden Harm (2004)

The Executive's response to a report from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs into the children of drug-misusing parents. This describes a range of actions taking place in maternity, education, social and specialist services.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/health/hhser.pdf>

Supporting Safer Stronger Communities (2004)

Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan recognises the association between drugs and crime and disorder. It includes the recommendations of the Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation review and a series of actions designed to strengthen community safety.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/justice/scjp.pdf>

Getting Our Priorities Right (2001)

The National Strategy called for agencies to assess the needs of children of drug-misusing parents, and provide services to safeguard their welfare. This document set out national guidance for all relevant agencies to assist them in this task. The Scottish Executive asked all Drug Action Teams and Area Child Protection Committees to have in place local policies on support to drug misusing parents and their children, in line with the guidance in the document, by 2002.

The first part of the guidance sets out what we currently know about the extent of parental problem drug use and the impact on children. The second tackles the complex area of confidentiality and offers advice to agencies about when, and how, to share information. Part 3 sets out what agencies need to ask of families when they present with drug problems. Parts 4 and 5 provide guidance to staff on assessing and identifying risks to children, and on what kinds of help may be needed. Advice is given about how to work together more effectively. Work with children and their parents needs to be underpinned by jointly agreed policies, procedures and practice guidance and sound training and part 6 provides guidance on this. Each local Drug Action Team is advised to work closely with the Child Protection Committee to put in place joint policies and procedures for addressing the needs of children in these families.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/social/gopr-00.asp>

Services and activities

There are currently around 200 agencies across Scotland with a remit to provide care and treatment services for people with drug misuse problems. In addition, drug misuse often results in wider social and healthcare problems resulting in contact with GPs and primary care teams, mental health services, general hospital services, housing and social work teams.

The co-ordination and commissioning of services to meet local need is the responsibility of the 22 **Drug Action Teams** across Scotland. These bodies consist of senior officers from health, social work, housing, police, prisons, education and other agencies, depending on local circumstances.

Key recent/current issues and developments

- Drug treatment and rehabilitation services are being expanded across Scotland, with an additional £6m investment per year from 2005/6. The Executive is committed to increasing the number of people entering services by 10% per year, reducing waiting times and increasing the range of services available. Action is being taken to better align treatment services with the criminal justice system to reflect the important role of treatment in reducing reoffending in our society.
- *Know the Score*, Scotland's drug communications programme, has been redeveloped during 2005 to provide preventative messages to young people on specific drugs. A highly successful television campaign highlighting the health risks of cocaine is being followed by work to highlight the social consequences of heroin addiction. The campaign provides relevant, non-judgemental information on a range of drug and drug-related issues in order to help young people make informed choices.
- An action plan on *Hidden Harm* is being developed to ensure that the Executive's strategy for identifying and protecting the children of drug misusing parents is implemented effectively.
- A review of drug action teams will take place in 2005/6 to ensure that Scotland's drug strategy is being implemented effectively at local level.

Indication of volume/ trends

Not all problem drug users are in touch with or seek help from drug agencies. Therefore, estimating how many people there may be in Scotland with problem drug use is complex. Examination of drug agency contact data and prevalence studies suggests that only up to a third of problem drug users may be in touch with specialist services in different parts of Scotland. Information collected annually by the Scottish Drugs Misuse Database on new clients in contact with these services provides a starting point for assessing the size of the problem. In 2003/04, 12,657 people with drug problems made an initial contact with these agencies [source: ISD 2004]:

- a third (33%) were women;
- more than four fifths (85%) were unemployed and 73% of this group had been unemployed for one year or longer or had never been employed;
- nearly two thirds (63%) reported they were aged under 20 years when their drug use became a problem; 16% of these were under 15 years when their drug use became a problem;
- nearly one in five (18%) were living with dependent children;
- 28% lived with a partner or spouse and a further 30% lived with their parents;
- just over a quarter (26%) lived alone; and
- 45% of people stated that they had previously been in prison.

The proportion of clients reporting heroin use has increased year on year since 1995/96. In 2003/04, 71% of new clients presenting to treatment services reported using heroin. The proportion of people reporting that they had injected drugs in the previous month also increased during this period to 37% in 2003/04. Of these, one in three reported that they had shared needles. Two in five (38%) had begun injecting drugs in their late teens.

Pressures on the service

The increase in drug use over recent years and the improvements in accessibility to services have meant that more people are now accessing drug treatment and care services than ever before.

Substitute prescribing programmes, in particular, have expanded significantly to meet the demand for the service. Often, interventions such as methadone maintenance therapy will last for many months or years before the individual will move on. This creates an ongoing pressure for service providers and commissioners to ensure that the services provided continue to meet the changing needs of the individual, and also to ensure that this type of services remains accessible to new patients.

Implications for Joint Working

Across Scotland, there has been an increasing interest in recent years in the development of integrated care services for people with drug misuse problems. This has grown from recognition that people with drug misuse problems will, in many cases, have a range of other difficulties in their lives. A range of treatment, care and support services, for example, housing, training and employment services, may be needed to help individuals to make progress towards recovery and to improve their relationships with their family, friends and community. In DAT areas, planning for integrated care is at various stages from early discussions to quite advanced planning, while in a small number of areas a model of integrated care is in place.

Other relevant material

The Effective Interventions Unit was set up in June 2000 to identify and disseminate effective practice to support the implementation of the drug misuse strategy, **Tackling Drugs in Scotland: Action in Partnership (1999)**. Over its five-year tenure it has produced 59 guides and research reviews, identifying effective practice in drug treatment, care and rehabilitation. All documents can be viewed on the following website:

<http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/eiu/eiu.htm>

How can I find out more?

Drug Misuse Information Scotland provides information, statistics and research on drug misuse in Scotland. The target audience are policy makers, professionals, researchers, employers and the wider community. <http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/>

Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) is the national non-government drugs policy and information agency working in partnership with others to co-ordinate effective responses to drug use in Scotland. <http://www.sdf.org.uk/>

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland is an independent charitable Trust, funding registered charities focusing on the needs of people in Scottish communities. <http://www.fundingthefuture.org.uk/pages/ourgrants.asp?pi=60>