

# Cross-Party Group on Substance Use

Date and Time: 16 May 2024

Minute

Present

MSPs

Monica Lennon MSP                      Co-Convenor

Miles Briggs MSP

Audrey Nicoll MSP

Invited guests

Donatella Olisterno, Hollie Carter and James Armstrong, Phoenix Futures Scotland  
(Presenters)

Non-MSP Group Members

Liam Mehigan	Abbeycare Scotland
Gary Meek	Blue Triangle Housing Association
Simon Holmes	Change Grow Live
Richard Thomson	Community Justice Scotland
Sarah Scott	Community Pharmacy Scotland
Viki Fox	Cyrenians
Brenda Bradley	Equal Say
Liam Cairns	Equal Say
Anne Marie Ward	Favor UK
Michael Trail	Jericho House
Duncan Stewart	NHS Lothian
Joanne Smith	NSPCC
Catherine Menta	Rowan Alba
Tracey McFall	Scottish Recovery Consortium
Marianna Marquardt	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Julie Heslin McCartney	Scottish Drugs Forum
Natalie Logan	SISCO
Cara McKendry	SISCO
Graeme Callander	We Are With You
Austin Smith	Secretariat

# Apologies

Stuart McMillan MSP  
Paul Sweeney MSP  
Lesley Ross

Co-convenor  
Glasgow Council on Alcohol

## Agenda item 1

### Welcome and Housekeeping

Monica opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate.

Monica updated the Group regarding the name change agreed by the group (to CPG on Substance Use). The Parliamentary body is open to the request but have yet to process the change and the group name remains unchanged at the time of this meeting.

## Agenda item 2

### Phoenix Futures Harper House Specialist Family Residential Service

The group welcomed a delegation representing the Phoenix Futures Scotland service Harper House – the national family service - Donatella Olisterno, Registered Manager; Hollie Carter, a Harper House graduate and James Armstrong, Director of Marketing and Innovation.

Presentation: Families face a variety of issues which can include drug related deaths and alcohol related harm – particularly impacted by child loss; lack of access to high quality childcare and to treatment and detox interventions. Socially and in engaging with services they face stigma and significant health inequalities. In terms of drug treatment – residential services – they have faced choosing between access to and parenting their children and their treatment and recovery.

All of this is in the context of intergenerational ACEs which impact or may impact their children and wider complex needs.

The national family service was established as Harper House by Phoenix Futures Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government with £8million in 2021, part of the Residential Rehabilitation Rapid Capacity Programme. It is the only service in Scotland offering recovery support to parents while remaining the carers of their children.

The service first opened in November 2022 and has supported over 40 families  
The service has capacity for up to 20 families, providing a safe and inclusive environment and a flexible programme between 12 and 26 weeks

The service offer detox for parents and has registered in-house Childcare Centre which can provide support to children.

Families can have 12-18 months after care support after passing through the residential part of the service.

The structured programme has three elements: Interventions Parenting and Childcare. The service exists as a Therapeutic Community - an evidence-based model – and adopts a broad bio-psycho-social approach. A trauma-informed approach informs a 'Community As Method' approach which centres social and group support and relationship forming.

There is a structured timetable and families have a named keyworker and can call on 24/7 support.

Staff included a Registered Mental Health Nurse and an in-house GP.

The service is rooted in the service provider's experience of delivery and its refinement over 25 years; the Parents Under Pressure Programme and the promotion of positive and secure relationships

The service works on the basis of a generational preventative model and an attachment & strengths-based model. It offers one-to-one parenting sessions, weekly group parenting sessions while also providing childcare and individualised curricular access and care planning. Children aged up to 10 yrs attend local primary school which has strong links with the service.

Data on referrals suggests that the service will have full occupancy for the first time by end of June 2024. 23 referrals were received between January to end of April 2024. 80% of referrals received over this period were offered a placement

Hollie presented on her experience of the residential service from Phoenix Futures, how it transformed her personal situation and formed the basis for her recovery and future life. Hollie also reflected on what she experienced as the crucial features of support and the therapeutic relation she developed with the service and its staff.

## Agenda item 3

Questions and discussion

Members of the Group welcomed the presentation and enthused about what they had heard of the service.

There were questions and discussion points made on:

The savings both in terms of harms to people and budgetary from interventions that support families and prevent trauma (Audrey Nicoll MSP); the key importance of aftercare (Catherine Menta, Rowan Alba); 24 on call support with non-judgmental support with peers; (Donatella Olisterno, Phoenix Futures Scotland) service extends

support and actively engages people who have left; a commitment to return and engage; (Liam Cairns, Equal Say) the importance of access to children who are over 10 yrs and over 16 yrs – (Donatella Olisterno, Phoenix Futures Scotland) In this service, this is organised – over 16s have access at weekend. Women who are pregnant – provision of midwifery services remains a challenge for women from outside the local authority area. Women remain in OST until after the birth – then detox leaving sufficient time to complete programme. (Joanne Smith, NSPCC) Women fall through gaps even when motivated to change / address issues in the context of their pregnancy. But how do we ensure longer term engagement and services are provided? (Tracey McFall, Scottish Recovery Consortium) The therapeutic supports within communities may be being lost.

## Agenda item 4

Meeting close

Monica thanked the presenters and asked members to email ideas for the content of future meetings to the Secretariat.

Monica closed the meeting and invited attendees to participate in informal networking.

Date of next meeting 18 September 2024 at Scottish Parliament