

Minutes: **Cross Party Group on Drugs & Alcohol**

Date: **Wednesday 19th November 2014**

Time: **5.30pm–7.30pm**

Location: **The Scottish Parliament**

Chair: **Jayne Baxter MSP**

Present:

Jayne Baxter MSP
Anne McTaggart MSP

Attendees:

Stuart Byrne	VOCAL
Sophie Burt	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Ray Carstairs	Edinburgh and Midlothian Offender Recovery Service
Michael Chitehwe	West Lothian NHS Addictions Service
Scott Clements	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Gael Cochrane	Substance Misuse Development Officer, Edinburgh
Linda Cook	Individual
Alison Christie	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Jennifer Curran	Alcohol Focus Scotland
Sally Dick	Focus ARBD
Ian Davidson	West Lothian NHS Addictions Service
Christine Duncan	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Jo Edwards	Edinburgh Drug Treatment and Testing Order Service
Richard Foy	Fast Forward
Suzanne Gallagher	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Kate Grant	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Shirley Green	VOCAL – Voices of Carers Across Lothian
John Hamilton	Community Safety Glasgow
John Holleran	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Rhona Hunter	Circle
Kate Kasproicz	Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council
Dr Jaclyn Kehoe	Head of Addiction Psychology, NHS Lanarkshire
Dave Liddell	Scottish Drugs Forum
Prof Nancy Loucks	Families Outside
Karen McGregor	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Lilly Morris	Edinburgh Drug Treatment and Testing Order Service
Kerry Murray	NHS Lothian Health Promotion Service
Sharon Murray	Edinburgh Drug Treatment and Testing Order Service
Steve O'Rawe	PhD Research Student, School of Social Sciences, UWS
Jim Parker	Dumfries ADP Support Team
Dr Duncan Stewart	Vice-chair, Addictions Faculty, RCPsych in Scotland

Diane Thomson	Alcohol Focus Scotland
Ben Thurman	Mentor
Christina Valentine	Edinburgh Drug Treatment and Testing Order service
Chris Vickerman	Focus ARBD
Claire Wadsworth	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Vic Walker	Crossreach
Veronica Weston	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs
Elaine Wilson	Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland
Michelle Young	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

1. Welcome and apologies

Jayne Baxter welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself in substitution of Kezia Dugdale, to chair tonight's meeting. Apologies were received from: Emma Crawshaw, Max Cruickshank, John Finnie MSP, Rosaleen Harley, Kenny Harrison, Linda Rodgers, Cllr Iain Sloane and James Trolland.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated with the agenda and also appear on the Parliament website in draft format. There were no amendments and the minutes were accepted.

3. Meeting topic: support for families affected by alcohol misuse.

Jayne then introduced the following speakers:

Jennifer Curran from Alcohol Focus Scotland who provided some background and overview to the meeting. Jennifer discussed the AFS Harm to Others research published in November 2013, which highlighted how alcohol harm affects not only individual drinkers but those around them, including family members and friends. Jennifer went on to explain that the Harm to Others research report made a number of key recommendations, one of which was that a mapping be carried out of the availability of services to support those affected by someone else's drinking.

Jennifer highlighted that AFS and Scottish Families Against Alcohol & Drugs (SFAD) collaborated during 2014 to carry out a joint piece of work updating a directory of support services specifically for those affected by problem drinkers. Tonight was the launch of this online directory of services which can be accessed on the [SFAD](#) and [AFS](#) websites.

Veronica Weston from Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs provided an insight into the strain and worry of living with a family member who has problems with alcohol. Veronica praised the support that she has received from a family support worker from SFAD and the support group. She explained that this service and the support she had received from SFAD had been a critical lifeline to help cope through very difficult situations.

Alison Christie of Scottish Families Against Alcohol & Drugs provided an outline of the different services that SFAD provide: family support staff; peer-led groups;

telehealth care and helpline manned by trained staff. Alison outlined the length of time a family member will live with the situation before seeking help was usually around 8-10 years.

Alison highlighted that SFAAD will be working on a qualitative study to show the level of support services across Scotland and any gaps in services.

Shirley Green from VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian) outlined the range of support that they provide to families affected by alcohol and drugs within the Lothian area, including the introduction of SMART recovery groups for families and friends as well as their counselling and specialist surgeries. Shirley had brought along a video clip of a family member speaking about the support he had received from VOCAL. Unfortunately this was unable to be played on the evening due to technical difficulties, however this can be accessed by clicking this [link](#).

Shirley also brought along a new document which they have produced called "Family role in recovery – the positive impact of family support on recovery from addiction", copies were available for all those in attendance.

The chair then opened the meeting up for questions and discussion, focusing on the following areas:

- There were several comments around the recognition of family being a huge positive role. A question was asked around feeding into the current carers' legislation and the way in which we raise awareness of the important role that family members play? Should agencies be asking the question – who do you rely upon to take care of you?
- Evidence of NHS taking on role within prisons (addictions service) and there was a suggestion that the role of families could be enhanced here.
- Importance of involving family members has been recognised, but it was suggested that family members aren't always included in recovery discussions with professionals. There was a suggestion of establishing an Alcohol Charter – establishing permission from the person in recovery that a loved one will be updated and kept in touch.
- Sibling support and post-school, there is little support for young people. John Holleran, Alcohol Liaison Officer from SFAD spoke about research he is planning to do in this area.
- Children & Young People's Act - are there further ways we can feed in to this?
- Points were made around GIRFEC and the new children's plan. It was suggested that GIRFEC is good for children who have been identified but still gaps for those children who have not.

- The 'invisibility' factor was considered to still be a feature for some children, with particular concern around the children who are 'scraping through' and not getting any help or support. It was explained that these children will not 'over-present' but will not have the same aspirations as other children.
- The importance of being identified by teachers was highlighted here, and Jennifer Curran explained the Rory training taking place with some teachers. However, this is not consistent throughout the country so we need to ensure that the network of supports/resources are in place to actually help children.
- Training for generic services was also highlighted as really important e.g. health visitors who can access children in a way that no other professional can. It was suggested that contact is made with Home-Start – possible good interaction here.
- Early intervention was also raised and the need for additional training for midwifery and maternity services providing brief interventions. This is exacerbated by the public still not understanding the concept of unit measuring alcohol intake.
- Fetal alcohol syndrome group to present in 2015.
- Education in schools – the need for education for children was highlighted as being important.
- Lack of information on alcohol-related brain damage. Family members unaware of the condition and don't understand how it can affect them e.g. completing official forms can be really difficult.
- Jayne Baxter highlighted that it would be useful to see MSPs as a useful resource and a point of contact if we are trying to gather local information.

A question was raised about what is being done around new psychoactive substances, the use of which seems to go hand in hand with alcohol. It was suggested that there is a move back to ecstasy and cocaine due to the unexpected difficulties being experienced when using these substances. It was also confirmed that the CPG looked at this issue at the last meeting and that Kezia Dugdale asked parliamentary questions. These questions were distributed with the last minutes. The Scottish Parliament has also looked at this issue and there is an Official Report from the meeting in February.

4. AOCB – Max Cruickshank has submitted a statement for consideration of a future topic looking at licensing law and young people's drinking. AFS will discuss this with the co-conveners for a future meeting.

5. Date for future meetings – Wednesday 18 March 2015.