1. To what extent do you believe the Scottish Government’s national drugs strategy, The Road to Recovery, and the approach by Integration Authorities and NHS Boards are preventative?

- R2R is clear about the wider aspects of prevention linked to the economic strategy and the role of education for young people. The change of approach brought by Integration Authorities and NHS Boards has disrupted the focus of preventative work and early intervention.

- IMHO - Road to Recovery is outdated and needs to provide an updated version which supports the wider range of partners to be active in preventative activities including education, community learning, health services, police etc. It needs to link to the current day services and the changes that have taken place recently e.g. HSCP and Police Scotland. Current activities are inconsistent and unclear about who is responsible and how prevention activities should be part of everyday services and contacts.

- R2R stated what it termed Recovery from problematic drug use as: We mean a process through which an individual is enabled to move on from their problem drug use, towards a drug-free life as an active and contributing member of society. Furthermore, it incorporates the principle that recovery is most effective when service users’ needs and aspirations are placed at the centre of their care and treatment.

   It is well known that recovery will mean different things to different people and at different times and people working towards recovery from problematic drug use need the confidence and resilience to deal with the day to day issues and stressors in their personal situation/environment to make that recovery journey and to make the recovery sustainable. Nowadays this confidence and resilience is all the more harder due to ongoing inequalities and also the impact of austerity and welfare reform. This can derail a recovery journey especially if there is co-morbidity with mental ill health. The substance user can be yo yoing between stress and mental ill health and self medicating with substances and the treadmill carries on making recovery more difficult.

The Government’s vision in R2R was for how drug treatment services in Scotland should be delivered was based on the following three principles:

- First, recovery should be made the explicit aim of all services providing treatment and rehabilitation for people with problem drug use;
- secondly, a range of appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services must be available at a local level – since different people with different circumstances inevitably need different routes to recovery.
thirdly, treatment services must integrate effectively with a wider range of generic services to fully address the needs of people with problem drug use, not just their addiction

I feel that the third element about integration with a wider range of services has not been addressed compared to the first two principles especially in relation to mental Health support services. The IJB and HSCP for Aberdeenshire’s strategic plan do not adequately address this third principle and there is not enough focus on the needs of this client group. There is a need for a commitment to workforce development and for wider agencies to collaborate with the substance misuse services also acknowledging the continued changing patterns of drug use and the national and local increases in Drug Related deaths.

Are people’s personal circumstances getting worse due to impacts of welfare reform increasing the complexity of needs of our client group which in turn impacts on all the other services in having to cope with what is in front of the teams on a day to day basis? Re all of the above more action is needed and a commitment to have a more than adequate approach to dealing with this client group and that includes Primary care.

2. Is the approach adequate or is more action needed?

- A renewed focus the preventative effects of having work or occupation, housing, equality including health equality and supporting communities etc. is needed. A particular focus on children affected by adults in their lives that use drugs is needed to reduce the numbers of the next generation being sucked into problematic drug use. A universal commitment to behaviour change approaches for all workers in contact with the public is needed to support healthy, productive behaviours and support people away from behaviour that causes harm. Support for people that have begun on a journey to recovery is necessary so that they are prevented from relapsing. This requires knowledgeable support for recovery in the community. This does not need to be associated with drug treatment agencies and can involve peer support but peers also need to be supported to ensure safety for all.

- Not adequate more action required with specific actions as part of wider strategies and not always stand alone. Better recording tools required to allow more effective monitoring and analysis of trends etc. Better sharing of information and case conferencing to realise extent of issues and also to ensure anecdotal information is backed up by fact and to prevent knee jerk reaction. Need drivers for more actions and less waffle.

3. What evaluation has been done of interventions?

- I have not been involved in evaluations of prevention interventions.

- Care commission evaluated the quality principles for people in service but not wider. I am unaware of any evaluations of prevention activities and this causes issues in these times of limited resources and the need to be
able to evidence value for money and outcomes which are more complicated to monitor for prevention activities. Locally we have undertaken recommissioning of new services to ensure value for money and refocus on key areas and decommissioned services where best value could not be demonstrated.

4. Are the services and national drugs strategy being measured and evaluated in terms of cost and benefit?

- I don’t think that the strategy is being measured in terms of cost and benefit across the country.

- Locally ADPs report on totality of spend and in relation to different activities. Locally we provide information to be collated at a national level and many of these questions would relate to activities recommended in Road to recovery. In addition to this it would be good if other areas were reporting on related activity that supports Road to recovery intentions. We will continue to monitor our new services both on value for money and on effective outcomes being achieved.