



Housing, Homelessness & Substance Misuse

ACTION PLAN

November 2006



INTRODUCTION

In May 2005, the Eastern Drugs and Alcohol Co-ordination Team (EDACT) helped facilitate the setting up of a Housing, Homelessness and Substance Misuse forum comprising of members of the substance misuse and housing/homelessness sectors. The terms of reference for the group were as follows:

- To seek clarification around policy and strategy mechanisms for the co-ordination of supported housing and drug and alcohol services;
- To work towards appropriate training options for homelessness/addiction services;
- To identify current health promotion activities and to progress the targeting of homeless individuals for health promotion information and messages;
- To map services and identify service gaps.

This forum produced a paper entitled “The Scale of the Problem” which outlined existing provision and looked at gaps in services. This paper was the basis for a seminar on 28th March 2006; at this seminar members of both sectors came together to look at what needed to be done to ensure more joined up working between the sectors.

A steering group was convened to produce an action plan for the forum on the basis of the recommendations from the seminar. The membership of the steering group was as follows:

Owen O’Neill – EDACT
Davis Turkington – EDACT
Micky Foley – Drug Outreach Team
Des Marley – NIHE
Dolores Ferran – NIHE
Susan Gilbride – NIHE
Mal Byrne – Multi Disciplinary Homeless Support Team
Peter Bohill - Community Addiction Team
David Carroll - Simon Community
Brian Higgins - DePaul Trust

An action plan produced by the steering group was endorsed by the forum on the 12th October. At that meeting, it was agreed that the work of the forum was complete and that responsibility for implementing the plan was given over to the steering group. It was agreed to co-opt additional members on to the steering group as and when the group sees fit.

Implementation

The action plan details the work of the steering group until March 2008.

ACTION PLAN

1) Accommodation for IDU's presenting as homeless

An assessment of need for a dedicated hostel for intravenous drug users will be undertaken. This will initially be done by means of a review of the client information held by the Drug Outreach Team to establish the number of clients who experience homelessness during their engagement with the team.

Possible models of accommodation appropriate for this client group will be considered.

If it is established that there is a significant number of IDU's who are homeless and experience difficulty in obtaining/maintaining a place in a generic hostel, a more in-depth analysis will be carried out in order to determine the most appropriate type of provision.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Review of DOT client information	DOT	Sept. 06
Consideration of possible models	Steering Group	Nov. 06
Needs analysis		

2) Training across substance misuse and housing/homelessness sectors

EDACT awarded a tender to the Council for the Homeless NI to provide a wide range of training across the Homeless and Substance Misuse sectors. It is envisaged that the training would include the use of a basic assessment tool which would guide those within the housing/homelessness sector in making appropriate referrals to the substance misuse sector.

This tender will be granted initially for 18 months; it is possible that this will be extended by a further 12 months if there is still demonstrable need and the training can be shown to be having an impact.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Training provided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hostels/Homelessness agencies• Supporting people projects• Substance misuse services Cross-sectoral placements and mentoring opportunities also to be considered	CHNI	March 2008, possible extension to March 2009

3) Ensuring the provision of appropriate floating support for those with substance misuse problems who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless

The issue as to whether specific floating support services are needed for the above groups of people was discussed at length within both the steering group and the forum. A Floating support service for Opiate users in contact with the Drug outreach Team exists. Whether similar services are needed for alcohol users will form the basis of this work. The steering group will engage with Supporting People in order to ensure appropriate support is available for and accessible to this client group.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Identification of support needs of client group	Supporting people and steering group	
Identification of any gaps in service	As above	
Planning to provide any further services if needed	As above	

4) Access to treatment for those who are homeless

The steering group will seek to influence substance misuse services to ensure pro-active engagement with this client group.

The steering group will undertake further assessment of need for substance misuse services among this client group. The forum will also undertake to establish the scope for provision of community-based alcohol detox for homeless people living in hostels.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Analysis of needs of client group	Steering Group	
Identification of any gaps in service provision	Steering Group	
Engagement with substance misuse sector to fill any identified gaps, whether through the establishment of services or the modification of existing services.	Steering Group	
Investigation of scope for provision of community-based alcohol detox for homeless people living in hostels	Steering Group	

5) Ensuring that accommodation provided for the homeless reflects the needs of the homeless population with regard to substance misuse

There should be adequate low threshold provision for those who are unlikely to maintain abstinence. This may mean that greater flexibility around the admission of active substance misusers to hostels is required.

The steering group sees this as being addressed through the provision of training and support to hostel staff and by encouraging hostels to review their policies.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Training provided to hostels on substance misuse issues	CHNI	March 2008, possible extension to March 2009
Support supplied to hostels by EXTERN MDHST Drugs Worker	MDHST	March 2008
Engagement with hostels to encourage them to review policies on admitting substance misusers	Steering Group /NIHE	

6) Assessment of need for low threshold (damp) 'move-on' options

The steering group will seek to determine the need for low threshold, longer-term accommodation options for chronic drinkers. Consideration will also be given to the associated care management issues.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Assessment of need for low threshold, longer-term accommodation options for chronic drinkers.	Steering Group	
Planning to meet any identified needs.	Steering Group /stakeholders	

7) Case management/keyworking

The steering group will explore the feasibility of introducing a case management/keyworking system which would ensure that a single person is responsible for co-ordinating the provision of services to an individual client. The steering group will also explore options as to where such a role should be based, including looking at more flexible floating support.

Action	Who	Timeframe
Discussion with relevant stakeholders to determine if and how such a system should be introduced	Steering Group	

N.B. The forum also identified as an issue the provision of community-based supports/interventions in areas outside Belfast. The steering group intends to address this issue in the future, however, it feels that to address the issue in the current action plan is unrealistic given the capacity of the steering group.



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