



LDAN Homelessness and Drug and Alcohol Forum

City Hall, Committee Room 4, 10.30 to 1pm, 19th January 2009

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Cathy Weatherald	Cardboard Citizens
Colin Higgins	Broadway
Eleanor Welch	Thames Reach
Jane Bancroft	Homeless Link
Jennifer Travassos	Broadway
Sarah Stow	Eaves Housing
Sharon Kirk	Foundation66
Arlene Kilim	London Irish Women's Centre
Terri Filkins	Thames Reach
Esther Sample	LDAN
Marcus Roberts (Chair)	DrugScope/LDAN
Niamh Eastwood (speaker)	Release
Jodie Woodward (speaker)	Nia Project
Janet Morgan	P3
Deola R Shaw	United Anglo Caribbean Soc
Amanda Singh	Alone in London
Laura Milner	Foundation66
Catherine Ashforth	Eaves Housing
Monica Beadle	Alone in London
Jackie Lees	Shelter
Cordelia Mayfield	Foundation66
Dean Hooper	DrugScope/LDAN
James Finn	Thames Reach

Introductions and welcome to LDAN Homelessness and Drug and Alcohol Forum

Marcus Roberts, Director of Policy at DrugScope, initiated a round of introductions and provided a brief overview of LDAN's involvement in the London Council Second Tier Support project and the objectives of the LDAN Homelessness Drug and Alcohol Forum.

Training presentation on legal issues affecting those working with drug users

Niamh Eastwood, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Director at Release gave an overview of current legal issues affecting those working with drug users. Advice for homelessness workers included, supervising all areas of the premises, being consistent with exclusion policies, developing good relationships with local police. See accompanying powerpoint for more information.

Discussion:

- What is meant by 'supervision' of premises was raised. The group discussed that just being in that area, for example drinking tea/chatting to residents counts as supervision.
- Forum members discussed that often when closure orders are passed on private/social housing, local authority homelessness/housing options departments do not always fulfil their duty to provide emergency accommodation.
- Niamh highlighted the free legal resources/advice that can be accessed by homelessness workers through the Release website: www.release.org.uk

Example of good practice from a London councils project: The Nia project

Jodie Woodward, Senior Support Worker at The Nia Project provided an overview of their specialist refuge and substance misuse service. See accompanying powerpoint for more information.

Discussion:

- The project allows women to use drugs in their rooms.
- Children are permitted to visit the hostel.
- The residents have so far generally been White British but there is a mix of ages.
- There is no waiting list – if there is a free room they advertise on refuges online: <https://www.ukrefugesonline.org/authenticate.asp>
- Members discussed that women who are using substances very chaotically are still unlikely to be able to access refuge provision.

Policy update

Marcus Roberts, Director of Policy at DrugScope, provided a brief overview of current policy issues in the drug and alcohol sector:

Welfare Reform- Marcus outlined that the government has abandoned proposals in the Welfare Reform Bill to withhold benefits from drug users who do not go into treatment after pressure from drugs charities. The Bill however still includes mandatory powers to force drug users to attend a drug assessment and to attend 'education sessions'. On 12th November 2009, the Welfare Reform Bill received Royal Assent, meaning that, for the first time, the UK's social security system contains specific provisions for drug and alcohol users. The new regime will initially only apply to people who use heroin and/or crack cocaine and will be piloted in five regions, including Central London for two years from October 2010.

Independent Safeguarding Authority – The Independent Safeguarding Authority was set up in 2009 to strengthen the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The ISA will require all relevant employers to register their staff and volunteers for ISA approval from November this year. They will have the authority to put those they find unsuitable on a 'barred list' and prevent them from working with vulnerable groups. LDAN has produced a 'frequently asked questions' document for the drug and alcohol sector in coordination with Adrian Harding, Operational Head of the ISA. Available at www.ldan.org.uk

LDAN Response to the London Health Inequalities Strategy – Following a consultation process with members, LDAN has submitted a response to the London Health Inequality Strategy. LDAN's response focuses on barriers to health and social care for drug and alcohol service users, and also includes specific recommendations that relate to homelessness, dual diagnosis and employment pathways. Available at www.ldan.org.uk

Information Sharing and Group Work

1. Do you know of any specific trends in drug or alcohol use amongst different demographic and equality groups in London?

- Older homeless people drinking more heavily and becoming dependent on high levels of prescription drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-depressants. Also issues with the sharing of prescription drugs
- More people combining drugs with alcohol - Stronger alcohol becoming cheaper
- Underage drinking on the increase
- Increase in women using crack
- Khat use on the increase- esp. Somalian community
- being widely used amongst young people
- Pharmaceutical use replacing glue-sniffing
- There have been fatalities amongst Eastern European rough sleepers due to drinking hospital handwash
- Cocaine increase amongst the middle classes
- Increase in skunk/stronger cannabis leading to mental health problems
- Ketamine, Ecstasy and Legal highs widely used amongst young people
- GBL use in LGBT community
- Heroin/crack use amongst travelling communities

2. What are the particular challenges for different demographic and equality groups who seek to access homelessness and drug and alcohol support in London?

- Eastern Europeans- no recourse to public funds and Language barriers
- EU students proving eligibility for housing
- Drugs services are very male-dominated
- Shame prevents people accessing treatment in some communities particularly because individuals have to access services within their own borough
- People with 'low level' substance misuse problems can not meet the threshold for specialist housing but are also not accepted by mainstream housing
- Hostel access being 'gate-kept'
- Local Authority Homelessness staff are unaccommodating
- People fleeing violence/drug misuse may have to work with the same service or workers which increases their risk
- Advice coming from untrained members of communities
- Commissioning based on cost instead of quality

3. Do more specialist services need to be developed? For which groups?

- Many organisations are losing their specialist provision- e.g. Foundation 66 has just lost 2 specialist services
- Partnership working needs to be developed, as it doesn't currently appropriately replace dedicated specialist services
- Middle ground services for people between use and detox
- Creating housing and services for women other than just those fleeing violence
- Need for culture-specific housing
- Training for community groups
- Crack services
- Peer-to-peer young people's education services
- Provision for families
- Single people with low support needs
- More specialist housing for older homeless people
- More provision for those with 'no recourse to public funds'