



LDAN Homelessness and Drug and Alcohol Forum

27th October, 2009, Homeless link Offices

Attendees

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Laura Milner (speaker) | Foundation66 |
| Harry Shapiro (speaker) | DrugScope |
| Oliver Hilbery (speaker) | Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) |
| Marcus Roberts (Chair) | DrugScope/LDAN |
| Jane Bancroft | Homelesslink |
| Esther Sample | LDAN |
| Lucy Martin | Cardboard Citizens |
| Nicola Busby | P3 Charity |
| Sim Mandair | Solace Women's Aid |
| Liz Denford | Thames Reach Floating Support |
| Eleanor Welch | Thames Reach Floating Support |
| Cordelia Mayfield | FOUNDATION66 |
| Abi Junaid | FOUNDATION66 |
| Janet Morgan | P3 Charity |
| Jane Palmer | P3 Charity |
| Anna Smythe | Thames Reach Wandsworth |
| Uche Wombu | Thames Reach Stamford Street Hostel |
| Jasneel Dhanjal | LDAN/Drugscope |

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. Esther Sample, Policy Officer for LDAN outlined the terms of reference for Homelessness D&A Forum.

Training presentation on drugs and drug treatment

Harry Shapiro, Director of Communications at DrugScope, gave an overview of current drugs and drug treatment in the UK. See accompanying powerpoint for more information.

Discussion:

- Members were keen to have a similar presentation on Alcohol.
- The group discussed the relative merits of different types of substitute prescribing e.g. subutex and methadone
- Discussion on social images surrounding heroin and crack use and the cycles of culture and fashion that influence drug use
- The lack of transitional services for young adults was raised

Example of good practice from a London councils project

Laura Milner, SE Services Manager at Foundation66 provided an overview of their housing and substance misuse services. See accompanying powerpoint for more information.

Discussion:

- Foundation66 housing options service will take on referrals from other organisations and boroughs.
- They provide a web of housing/substance misuse services but are keen to form partnerships and work with other organisations to provide more comprehensive support.
- They provide services that are abstinence and non-abstinence based (including community services and a 'wet' hostel)

Policy update

Oliver Hilbery, Project Director of Making Every Adult Matter, gave an overview of the new coalition of four national charities – Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind – formed to influence policy and services for adults with multiple needs and exclusions. See accompanying powerpoint for more information.

Discussion:

- Members raised the issue of becoming a member of the MEAM coalition. Oliver informed them that the coalition is made up from the membership organisations of DrugScope, HomelessLink, Clinks and Mind.
- Oliver encouraged members to read MEAM's vision document and to register support or send comments through the website www.meam.org.uk

Information Sharing and Group Work

Summary of comments from group work:

1. Emerging trends in drug and alcohol use amongst homeless service users

- Combined drug and alcohol use
- Not using tobacco with cannabis
- Stronger forms of cannabis (Skunk)
- Legal aspects and classifications have become more confusing
- More drug use than ever due to vicious cycles resulting from methods of intervention
- Increased availability of street methadone – leads to self-prescribing and reduced commitment to 'scripting'
- Eastern European community misusing hospital liquids that contain alcohol (e.g. hand sanitizers)
- More homeless groups with no recourse to public funds
- Increased competitiveness between agencies and decreased funding
- Increased mergers due to lack of funding which leads to fewer resources and choices for service users and larger caseloads for workers
- Specific specialist services are forced to become more generic because they are asked to work with more complex needs - This leads to a loss of specialist knowledge

- Homeless Person's Unit replaced by 'Housing Options' – single homeless excluded from help and services

2. Biggest challenges your organisation faces in terms of working with drug and alcohol services in London

- Funding for rehabilitation
- No transitional services for young people
- Service user commitment to access treatment
- Parents influences e.g. smoking cannabis
- Provision in certain geographical areas, no consistency between boroughs
- Lack of information on services
- Services not available for some drug types
- Lack of funds available for certain clients (particularly those with no recourse to public funds)
- Funding attached to treatment services being reduced – due to lack of valid research and cost-cutting
- Getting organisations to accept referrals – highly specific eligibility criteria creates a barrier.
- Frontline workers often have a lack of referral rights to mainstream government services
- Not treated fairly, thoroughly or sympathetically by mainstream government services (NHS, social services)
- Clients reluctant to return to services where they feel they have been treated badly
- Jargon differences between service sectors
- Competition between agencies can sometimes mean that services like to retain their clients
- Lack of specialist services for vulnerable groups e.g. women with substance misuse and domestic violence

3. Improving co-ordination between homelessness sector and drugs/alcohol sector

- More forums and networking events
- Cross-borough partnerships – helping them to move on to another area after rehab
- More training on surrounding topics and support for multiple needs
- Mutual cross-agency training
- Proactive support instead of reactive support (e.g. mental health services)
- Get managers involved on the front line – to help them understand staff needs and training etc.
- More support on gang culture
- Information sharing e.g. cross-borough data-bases (E-transferable)
- Need for better communication and respect between different service providers (e.g. charities and statutory service providers)
- Need for a "contact person" within social services/ statutory drug/alcohol services (e.g. communication relations officer who the charitable organisations can contact)
- Essential that the government provides housing for service users who have completed drug and alcohol treatment
- More active DAAT coordination – setting up referral pathways

4. Ideas for future LDAN Homelessness and Drug and Alcohol Forum meetings

- Legal issues
- Involvement of statutory sectors e.g. social workers and mental health services
- Offending behaviours e.g. gangs
- Funding – how to apply
- Up-to-date facts – legal drugs and street drugs
- Treatment options
- Training/discussions on cross-sector trust and relationship building
- Domestic violence
- Need to increase networking with social services
- More homeless service managers to attend the meeting