

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

29th March 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Substance Misuse in Stockton-on-Tees

SUMMARY

- Substance misuse and drug related deaths remain a significant problem in Stockton-on-Tees.
- The local implementation of the national drug strategy 'From Harm to Hope' is supported by additional national funding for the expansion of local drug treatment services and introduction of combatting drug partnerships.
- A Tees Combatting Drug Partnership has been launched to oversee the implementation of the national drug strategy, in support of local action.
- Local drug treatment services are expanding their offer to improve access to treatment and recovery.

RECOMMENDATION

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- Note the content of the report
- Note ongoing work to expand local treatment services and to consider substance misuse within the context of reducing health inequalities and the development of a local peer advocacy programme

DETAIL

Context

1. Substance misuse in Stockton-on-Tees remains an issue with an estimated 1800 opiate and crack cocaine users of which almost 1000 were in treatment in 2020/21. Drug related deaths (drug misuse deaths) in 2021 were highest in the North East and have seen a step increase over the last 10 years. The rate in Stockton in 2019-21 was similar to the North East average with 87 drug misuse deaths during the period.
2. Drug markets are shifting away from opioid (heroin) to an increased use and availability of cocaine, crack cocaine, prescription drugs, including benzodiazepines and pregabalin and counterfeit prescription drugs.

3. The national drug strategy by Dame Carol Black *'From Harm to Hope'*, sets out the Government's aims to cut crime and save lives by reducing the supply and demand for drugs and delivering high-quality treatment and recovery services over the next 10 years. The implementation of the strategy is supported by additional funding to increase capacity for treatment services, strengthen links to criminal justice and prevent drug-related deaths. Further funding is provided to develop local capacity for medically managed drug and alcohol detoxification and to provide employability and work placement support.

Regional action

4. At regional level local authorities represented through their public health drug leads are working together in the regional Substance Misuse Leads Network which works closely with the regional Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and reports to the regional Directors of Public Health.
5. The network monitors and reviews data, works on joint approaches to drug related deaths, links with the wider system including NHS and prisons and shares best practice. Over the past year the network has worked very closely with providers to ensure a robust response of treatment services during the pandemic, keeping service-users safe and connected with treatment. This included ensuring access through the introduction of telephone and virtual appointments and to respond to emerging challenges such as how to provide opioid substitution treatment with minimal contact with pharmacies during lockdown.
6. Following the pandemic, the group has focused on working with OHID on the local allocation of drug strategy related grants based on national guidance. The group also links with the ICS in relation to the impact of drug misuse on health inequalities and health and social care services.

Tees action

7. A key component of the strategy was to introduce Combatting Drug Partnerships to identify local need and oversee progress. The Cleveland Combatting Drug Partnership (CCDP) was established in October 2022 and is chaired by the Police & Crime Commissioner. The CCDP has just completed a needs assessment and, working with system partners including local authorities, has begun to develop a plan of action, which will align with the aims of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Safer Stockton Partnership and Fairer Stockton-on-Tees.
8. Problem Solving Courts focussing on substance misuse are being introduced in three pilot sites across the country. Teesside Crown Court will target those with substance misuse issues linked to their offending and aim to address their substance misuse and consequently their offending through additional support from the judge and community services.
9. Preventing drug related deaths: In recognition of the high rate of drug related deaths in Teesside, local authorities have come together to prevent drug related deaths. This

includes a local network and a jointly funded post to liaise with the Coroner, Police, the NHS and treatment providers to understand and address causes for drug related deaths, develop pathways to respond to overdoses and prevent deaths. A multi- agency case review process for each suspected drug related death has been implemented to understand gaps, share learning, and facilitate improvement in services and pathways.

Local action

10. Stockton Borough Council has received additional grant funding since 2021 to fund additional capacity in drug and alcohol treatment services and provision of inpatient detoxification wto support service users back into work.
11. At local level public health at Stockton-on-Tees Borough council is leading on prevention, harm reduction and recovery approaches in line with the evidence base, through awareness raising, training and the commissioning of an integrated drug and alcohol recovery service, delivered by CGL.
12. Prevention starts from an early age with the development of personal resilience to protect those at risk of or vulnerable to substance misuse. This includes input to school communities on substance misuse by Education Improvement (Healthy Schools) and Stockton's Recovery Service (CGL) as well as individual and group-based work by the 5-19 (school nursing) service to support those at risk. Stockton Borough Council and CGL also raise awareness to the risks of misuse of prescription and illegal drugs through campaigns for example during the international recovery month in September.
13. Harm reduction approaches offered through the recovery service, pharmacies and others include the provision of clean syringes to prevent infections or the transmission of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C. Pharmacies also provide supervision of the consumption of medication used in the treatment of drug misuse (substitution therapy) to ensure compliance with treatment and to prevent overdoses. In addition, programmes to prevent further harm and death from drug overdoses is being rolled out by distributing overdose medication (naloxone) to service users, their families, and carers, in A&E, the ambulance service, police and prison.
14. A specialist carer service for families affected by substance misuse is provided through Bridges. Bridges supports through individual and group-based support and works with the recovery service.
15. The treatment and recovery service is provided by Change Grow Live (CGL) located in the centre of Stockton, which offers a broad range of services for adults and young people addicted to alcohol or drugs. The treatment journey includes community detoxification, substitution therapy, drinking/dosing down, wound care, psychological support, diversionary activities, employability, peer support and much more. CGL also works with Recovery Connections, the NHS, and other partners to ensure joined up pathways and communication e.g., for prison leavers, the development of pathways into independent living and into work.
16. Despite the increased investment into services the number of people in drug treatment in

Stockton-on-Tees has decreased over the past year from 1594 in 2021 to 1518 in 2020. This seems surprising but is seen as a result of more discharges from treatment for opioid addictions after a period during which discharges were consciously delayed. During the pandemic treatment services tried to provide additional support and keep service users engaged in treatment. However overall treatment numbers reduced only slightly with the number of patients in treatment for alcohol having increased threefold from 121 in 2021 to 362 in 2022. It is important to recognise that a 'good outcome' for the substance misuse population can often be defined as keeping individuals and those around them safe, and does not always mean discharge from treatment.

17. The number of young people in treatment was low with only 41 accessing drug or alcohol treatment in the past year. Further work to better understand the needs children and young people and develop in order to improve access to services is in progress. The expansion of treatment capacity also increases capacity to support children and young people.

Number of people in treatment, November 2022	
All adults in structured treatment	1518
Opiates	889
Non opiates (combined non-opiate only and non-opiates and alcohol)	267
Alcohol	362
All young people in structured treatment	41

18. The work on substance misuse takes an evidence-based approach across partners in the health and wellbeing system. Inherent to this approach is addressing inequalities. Work is underway on the potential for different ways of working e.g. through the multiple complex needs pilot (using local peer advocates) - working alongside communities who have substance misuse issues alongside other needs, to take an assets-based approach and empower and enable them to access support. We are also looking to work alongside the community further to shape our future models of support.

Next Steps

19. Work will be progressed to:
- Further develop systems, work at regional, Teeswide and local level to prevent additional substance misuse, improve access to treatment and reduce drug related deaths.
 - Continue the local implementation of the national drug strategy through the additional treatment grant to ensure improved access to high quality treatment services.
 - Strengthen our prevention and harm reduction approach and specifically through improved access to naloxone, working with pharmacies and police.
 - Support the development and implementation of the Cleveland Combating Drugs Partnership plan.
 - Work together to improve our understanding and response to the needs of children and young people at risk of or engaging in substance misuse
 - Further develop our community asset-based approach to addressing substance misuse, with further updates on this back to the Board

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