

SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS ROCHFORD DISTRICT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces a study which investigates the substance misuse and needs of young people across Rochford District. It seeks Members' views on its content and the recommendations contained therein.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council is a key partner in the Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership whose core membership includes - Essex Police, Essex County Council, Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust, National Probation Service - Essex and the Essex Police Authority.
- 2.2 In 2002 funding was secured by the Castle Point and Rochford Drugs Reference Group from the Communities Against Drugs Home Office funding budget to enable the StAR Partnership to commission a study around substance misuse and the needs of young people in the Rochford District.
- 2.3 The original aims of the study were:
- To explore the substance misuse and needs of young people across Rochford District
 - To explore the views of professionals around young people and substance misuse.
 - To make specific recommendations about the future development of services.
- 2.4 However, it soon became clear that substance misuse issues could not be dealt with in isolation and that if any impact were to be made on the lives of young people in Rochford, then issues such as transport and availability of facilities were just as important to consider. The report was completed in April 2003. A copy has been placed in the Members' Library at the Civic Suite for information. Appendix A summarises its key recommendations.

3 SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

- 3.1 A large group of young people were consulted and asked about their knowledge of drugs and which drugs they perceived young people across the Rochford District were using.

- 3.2 The results showed that young people consider alcohol, cannabis and cigarettes as the most commonly used drugs. Cocaine, Speed (Amphetamine), LSD and Steroids were identified but not perceived as being used to any great extent. Heroin was not mentioned.
- 3.3 When asked where would they look to find information about drugs, the most common response was by asking a friend. This supports the provision of peer education initiatives, which work to influence peer groups in a positive way.
- 3.4 Young people were unaware of what services existed in relation to substance misuse and exactly what they offered.
- 3.5 They also stated that there was a lack of places to go and things for them to do across the Rochford District.

4 THE VIEWS OF PROFESSIONALS AROUND YOUNG PEOPLE AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE.

- 4.1 Of those professionals interviewed, (from groups such as the Youth Offending Team, Essex Police and Social Services), all thought that drugs was an issue for young people across the Rochford District. However, this was mostly anecdotal with little factual evidence to support it.
- 4.2 Almost a quarter of those interviewed felt that many young people did not see their drug use as problematic.
- 4.3 The most common drug that professionals thought young people were using was cannabis, closely followed by alcohol. Over a third of the professionals felt that ecstasy was used, almost a quarter said crack cocaine and only one fifth said tobacco.
- 4.4 Although aware of a number of services that existed, most were unaware what services young people were using.
- 4.5 Nearly all those interviewed agreed that young people needed more activities and/or places to go. Many felt that the majority of young people are not by nature difficult or deviant but are forced to 'hang around on street corners' due to a lack of facilities.

5 ADDRESSING THE FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- 5.1 The report makes a number of recommendations that, in order to implement, will have an impact on agencies within the Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. It is important, therefore, that all Partnership agencies consider these recommendations and their response to the issues raised.

- 5.2 In the Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, Primary Objective 4 (titled substance misuse), states under item four that 'resources be made available to scope the extent and level of problematic substance misuse through a pilot scheme in the Rochford District'. This study in effect does this but now that it is complete, it is important that its recommendations are considered in the context of all the other actions identified in the Strategy.
- 5.3 The intention is to report the study to the next Partnership meeting, so that all Partners can discuss its findings and the way forward. Although the lead on many of the items identified will be the Castle Point and Rochford Drugs Reference Group, it is important for the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to take ownership and overall responsibility to address the items raised.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

- 6.1 Some of the recommendations highlighted in the report are already underway financed through Home Office funding. These include:
- The information card, designed to provide young people with a list of available substance misuse services, is almost complete.
 - The family fact file, which details information of services for parents and professionals, has been completed and is currently being circulated.
- 6.2 Some of the other recommendations are also being advanced:
- A peer education project is in the early stages of being developed.
 - A parents project designed to train parents in drug awareness, who in turn then train other parents in their own home, is currently being developed by the Castle Point and Rochford Drugs and Alcohol Reference Group.
 - The possibility of a drop in facility is already being explored by a multi agency working group who will report back to the Partnership, with recommendations, this autumn.
 - The Disc Jockey project is currently being pushed forward by the District Council, King Edmunds School and RPS Rainer.
 - A community transport scheme is being developed by the District Council in conjunction with Essex County Council and RAVS.
 - A sports project designed to teach soccer coaching skills is being explored by the District Council and other agencies including representation from the Partnership.
 - The District Council is already actively engaged in providing diversionary schemes, e.g. holiday schemes, playground refurbishment, skateboard provision. The Parishes are also involved in expanding youth provision, e.g. skateboarding, Hawkwell Youth Forum.

- 6.3 Nevertheless, given the work already in hand, there are key areas where much needs to be done. These are:
- Professional training in respect to drugs awareness.
 - Review of the mobile out reach work by the Youth Service.
 - Further research into the sporting and recreational needs of young people.
- 6.4 On these matters yet to be actioned, Members might like to express a view as to which they consider is the most important, and which agencies from the Partnership should be asked to lead on these items.

7 CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT

- 7.1 The report concludes that the primary substances used in Rochford District by young people are cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. There are limited social or leisure facilities specifically for young people in the District and this situation is compounded by a lack of access. Young people would like more places to go and more things to do.
- 7.2 Young people and professionals are not generally aware of what services exist for young people around substance misuse. There is an immediate need to promote what services do exist and to develop a broad range of initiatives. The Rochford Crime & Disorder Partnership, and specifically through the Castle Point and Rochford Drugs and Alcohol Reference Group, will clearly need to consider existing services, promote these and consider new initiatives.
- 7.3 It will require a shared approach to planning by the Partnership agencies to ensure that the initiatives recommended are implemented in an appropriate order of priority, with close monitoring to ensure that they are effectively established. The Partnership will be instrumental in achieving this, with the Council playing its part.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Members will be aware that much of the work outlined in this report is funded through bids made where invited by the Home Office.
- 8.2 The implications for Rochford District Council, as a partner of the overall Partnership, will be to fund those activities that fall within its remit. The study will require consideration by the Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in order to identify who will lead on what and any additional resource implications..
- 8.3 Where actions by the Council are identified, consideration will need to be given within the overall budget process for 2004/05.

9 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That members note the report.
- (2) That Members consider which of the items highlighted in paragraph 6.3 should be given priority, if any, and which agencies should be asked to lead on these matters.

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Background Papers:

None.

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