

National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
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Evidence from Pembrokeshire County Council Community Drug and Alcohol Team – ASM(Q) 11 / Tystiolaeth gan Tîm Cyffuriau ac Alcohol Cymunedol Cyngor Sir Penfro – ASM(Q) 11

Inquiry into alcohol and substance misuse

Survey Consultation Response

Organisation/Respondent: Alex Panter, Social Worker Pembrokeshire County Council Community Drug and Alcohol Team

Questionnaire

01. Which client group(s) do you work with? (For example, under 18s, older persons, homeless, or female only)

All adults.

02. What are the main reasons why your clients take drugs or drink excessively? Please tick all that apply.

If you work with more than one client group or you feel that there are other reasons as to why your clients take drugs or drink excessively, please comment in the box below.

- *Peer pressure;*
- *A way to deal with stress;*
- *Client(s) already substance reliant;*
- *Mental health;*
- *Boost confidence;*
- *Relieve social anxiety;*
- *Environmental factors (for example – excessive drinking and/or drugs normalised in the home/community)*
- *Relationship problems;*



- *Financial concerns;*
- *Self-medication;*
- *Escapism.*

Comments

There are a multitude of reasons why the people we work with use drugs & alcohol, but for those who develop significant dependence this is in the main rooted in childhood emotional trauma of some description.

- o3. Are there certain groups of people who are more likely to be affected by drugs and excessive drinking? If so, which groups might they be?

Alcohol is generally non-discriminatory and prescription drugs also appear to present challenges across social groups. Illegal drug dependence in my experience is more prevalent in disadvantaged groups.

- o4. Does a particular stage of your clients' lives influence their likelihood of taking drugs or drinking excessively? If so, what stage might that be? (i.e. age, relationship breakdown, unemployment etc.)

Childhood.

- o5. What barriers exist for your client(s) when trying to access support and services?

- *Fear of consequences in relation to their children or the law for example;*
- *Travel to appointments;*
- *Fear of change.*

- o6. What barriers exist for services when trying to access support for client(s)?

N/A

- o7. What do you consider to be barriers for staff and frontline services in working with your client group(s), or substance misuse generally?

Lack of knowledge and skills and value judgements.



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- o8. Where do you think efforts should be targeted to address the issue of alcohol and substance misuse in Wales?

They should be holistic focusing on health and social care. There needs to be a huge shift in focus away from prohibition in relation to drugs and toward treatment. We appear to sometimes get stuck in a cycle of criminalising users which can lead to loss of job, family, housing etc. so we put in services to assist them to get those things back.

The challenge for me is to remove the stigma from substance misuse problems and see it as a health and social care issue. Behaviour associated with use such as dishonesty or violence should of course carry consequences and they should be the same as for anyone who commits those crimes but the weight given to the actual drug use itself in my view should be reduced.

People who experience drug or alcohol dependence are likely to require increasing health and social care as they get older disproportionate to those who do not. Services therefore need to be equipped to work hard to assist individuals to address their dependence as early in life as possible.

- o9. In which local authority area do you work? If you work outside of Wales, please write your local authority area below.

Pembrokeshire.

Contact Details

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