



NORTH AYRSHIRE
ALCOHOL & DRUG
PARTNERSHIP

North Ayrshire Alcohol & Drug Partnership
Development Day Report

April 2023

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1.0 Introduction

The North Ayrshire Alcohol & Drug Partnership (ADP) facilitated a development day on the 29th of March 2023 in Saltcoats Town Hall.

The event was attended by a variety of ADP partners across North Ayrshire including staff from HSCP services, Education, Police, Connected Communities, Third Sector Partners and people with lived/living experience and their families.

1.1 Executive Summary

The purpose of the event was for the ADP to facilitate a discussion based on the priorities identified in the current Alcohol and Drug Partnership Strategy, 2019-2024. The information gathered from exploring each topic will help to inform the future direction of the ADP and contribute to the development of an action plan.

The discussions helped to identify areas of strengths, gaps, and how we can work together to address them. The discussions identified the strengths in our statutory and third sector services providing support to people in recovery and their families. The contribution to the education agenda from our Prevention and Service Support Team (PSST) was noted as being invaluable but sometimes underutilised in certain areas.

The involvement of people with lived experience in shaping the work of the ADP was highlighted as being vitally important. Equally, having people with lived experience working within the service is of vital importance and should be built upon to help increase capacity. To help provide robust support to people in recovery feedback suggests that more community based, grassroots support is needed to help provide opportunities for peer support. In relation to Justice, local outcomes must be identified against the overarching strategic priority to enable us to provide greater support in this area.

On reflection, the event helped to identify key themes that the ADP should give consideration to. There was a willingness from people in the room to work together to help address the areas for development and build on our existing strengths in helping to tackle problem drug and alcohol use in North Ayrshire.

1.2 Independent Chair

The Independent Chair of the ADP, Billy Brotherston, delivered a presentation to help set the scene on the purpose and focus of the development day. Billy reminded everyone about the purpose of the ADP and how everyone in attendance had an active role to play in helping to address alcohol and drug related harms and deaths in North Ayrshire.

2.0 Methodology

The event was facilitated using a conversation café style approach to give people the space to have a positive discussion about the future direction of their ADP. The discussions aimed to explore and share people's experiences, opinions and ideas about the pertinent issues surrounding alcohol and drugs in North Ayrshire.

The conversations were facilitated by experienced members of staff focusing on the current strategic priorities for the ADP:

- Children and families affected by alcohol and drug use will be safe, healthy, included and supported.
- Fewer people develop problem drug use.
- People access and benefit from effective, integrated person-centred support to achieve their recovery.
- Less harm is caused by alcohol.

Delegates were asked to consider what strengths we have in relation to achieving each of our objectives, share ideas on where they think gaps exist, and reflect on how the ADP can support with facilitation and development work to address these areas.

3.0 Whole Family Approach

What we want to achieve:

Children and families affected by alcohol and drug use will be safe, healthy, included and supported.

3.1 Strengths:

Delegates were asked to consider what they felt our strengths in North Ayrshire in relation to supporting children and families affected by alcohol and drug use. It was evident within the responses there is a huge amount of value and recognition given to our statutory and third sector support partners in providing whole family support in a trauma informed way.

Many of the responses highlighted the significant contributions from North Ayrshire Drug & Alcohol Recovery Service (NADARS), CAAST, Turning Point Scotland's PEAR Service, Barnardos Strong Families Project, Children 1st, Phoenix Futures, and their new facility at Harper House. Others noted the work of Scottish Families and the Recovery College as being beneficial for people in North Ayrshire.

A significant number of the responses highlighted the value in the less traditional forms of support in the community such as Impact Arts who provide support to many vulnerable children through art therapy. The Irvine Youth Forum provide a space for the Recovery Drop in on a Friday and facilitate a breakfast club at Redburn Community Centre which many families who are impacted by alcohol and drug misuse access. Additionally, many of the delegates recorded the immense contribution of Café Solace in helping to provide support to families particularly in Irvine, Kilwinning, 3 Towns and the Garnock Valley.

Others identified the positive training opportunities that the ADP have helped to facilitate. CRAFT Training has been valuable in helping to develop people's knowledge of a specialist approach which looks at the whole family. With regards to education for children, the Champions for Change programme delivered by KA Leisure was identified as being positive in helping to raise awareness of the impact of drugs and alcohol amongst primary age children.

3.2 Identified Gaps:

There were many consistencies in the suggestions people provided in relation to gaps around providing support to children and families. While people identified the positive contributions from providers, one group highlighted that this could vary dependent on your location in North Ayrshire.

3.3 Sharing Information

One of the most significant themes that people highlighted was the need to improve information sharing and communication. This was mainly to highlight the training and resources that are available to people who are not directly involved in working within alcohol, drug, or recovery activity. One group highlighted the need for teams/people to have more opportunities to speak/network and build relationships. It was suggested that events like the development day are a great way of facilitating those opportunities, however, a good point was made about the subgroups being utilised more effectively for this. It was also highlighted that the engagement must be meaningful and clearly impact how the ADP operates.

More generally, people suggested that there needs to be a greater level of information about drugs and alcohol services and supports being made more available to people. Suggestions varied from the ADP producing a newsletter to developing campaigns that people can work on collectively.

3.4 Links with Education

Another strong theme to be identified was the need for strengthening the link between the ADP and Education services. Some suggestions from delegates included investing more in staff, such as drug and alcohol workers/social workers within schools to help develop relationships to carry out more preventative work and provide training. Other gaps included how we work collectively on issues such as vaping.

This theme was consistent throughout most of the conversations and will be expanded on later in this report.

4.0 Prevention & Education

What we want to achieve:

Fewer people develop problem drug use.

The prevention and education section of the discussion highlighted how important it is to have a coordinated, informed approach to helping educate, particularly young people, about the risks associated with drug and alcohol use.

4.1 Strengths

The contribution of the Prevention and Service Support Team (PSST) was noted as being incredibly valuable in North Ayrshire. The feedback highlighted the training calendar and other training events that the team facilitate which are open to anyone in North Ayrshire. The only observation made was how can we make better use of this team's knowledge and expertise in helping to inform more proactive work in schools around prevention and education. Turning Point's Scotland's PEAR service work focusing on prevention, education and recovery was recognised as being a notable strength and asset in North Ayrshire.

There was recognition given to work undertaken by the PSST to develop the PASS resource that can be used in education settings. However, the discussions indicate that this approach and resource may need to be reviewed and updated.

4.2 Young people

There was an overwhelming consensus that links between the ADP and Education services are vital in helping to progress with engaging and informing young people in North Ayrshire about drugs and alcohol. It was highlighted that community education also have a role in helping to contribute to this agenda and could potentially help reach young people who are not engaging in school.

It was evident that there an appetite from education colleagues who attended the development day to work more collaboratively with the ADP and relevant services. Many of our educators in attendance felt that that current approach to addressing the subject with children and young people in North Ayrshire was not having the required impact given the scale of the problem here. Some of the feedback indicated that teachers feel they might not be best placed in delivering the message to young people and emphasised the importance of providing learning at the right age.

4.3 Changing the Narrative

One group suggested that the narrative around the drug problem in Scotland must change for us to make progress. The way we talk to young people about drugs must change for us to help reduce stigma and face the problem head on.

“Stop the Taboo.”

There was recognition that we can't *'just tell'* young people not to take drugs. Delegates recalled previous campaigns that adopted this approach and failed. Instead, it was suggested that we need to adopt a more conversational approach to unpicking some of these issues. The tone of how our message is delivered needs to be relatable and current for it to resonate with our young people. This includes the language we use and the consistency of approach across the area, so each young person is receiving the same message.

There was a call to adopt more of a harm reduction approach, giving young people the proper, accurate information they need to make informed choices. However, it was noted that change might need to occur at a national policy level before we can make greater inroads at a local level.

“If you’re going to take it, take it safely.”

There is a realisation that we need to be honest about the problem that exists. We must work with young people to address stigma and help them understand the reasons people might find themselves with addiction issues. We must support young people to understand and challenge the notion that, *“that won’t happen to me”*. As well as consulting with specialist alcohol and drug recovery colleagues, we must engage with a range of young people to also help inform our approach to education.

Delegates suggested involving young people in helping to develop resources that are used in education. If the approach is informed by young people in North Ayrshire, it might have a better chance of resonating with their peers.

It was clear that the knowledge, expertise, and experience for delivering the correct and proportionate message to young people might be best to come from people with lived experience. In any steps to help addressing this multifaceted issue people who have been through their own recovery journeys can highlight the very real risks in a way that a class teacher might not be able to.

“It’s everyone’s business.”

4.4 Moving Forward

It is clear there is motivation from across partners to work together to modernise our approach to education around alcohol and drugs in North Ayrshire. It is clear the ADP have a key role in helping to coordinate an approach to this by giving people the opportunity to connect, share resources, ideas, training and work together to form a consistent, sustainable approach in our prevention and education agenda. This highlights the need for an ADP action plan to enable all partners to contribute to an innovative approach that enables everyone to contribute. From the conversations it is clear a balance of people with lived experience, young people and clinical expertise providing input is vital to helping make progress.

5.0 Recovery

What we want to achieve:

People access and benefit from effective, integrated person-centred support to achieve their recovery.

To help introduce the recovery element of the discussion, an interview was conducted with a panel of people with lived experience. They reflected on their own recovery journey and provided examples of what worked for them and highlighted that the recovery journey is not linear and requires a variety of different supports in clinical and community settings.

5.1 Strengths

There was a consensus on the day that there are more options for people to support their recovery. The clinical response to helping support recovery via NADARS was noted as being effective in supporting people in crisis and to achieve stabilisation. The introduction of the MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) standards was recognised as being positive in helping to provide people with a choice of treatment delivered in a person-centred way with support starting, if possible, on the day the person presents. The link between clinical interventions and social care was recognised as being hugely beneficial in helping to provide a robust service to people in recovery and their families.

5.2 Lived Experience in Services.

The introduction of more people with lived experience working within support services was highlighted as being a huge step in the right direction in helping provide support to people on their recovery journey. From the responses this has also helped NADARS to build and strengthen relationships with the people with lived experience with Recovery Development Workers providing dynamic support to people to access support on their recovery journey. This should be echoed by the people with lived experience who are employed by Turning Point Scotland helping to provide support to people in the community.

As previously mentioned, the contribution from Turning Point Scotland, Harbour, Café Solace, the Recovery Hub in Irvine, Eglinton Gardens, TACT, and other recovery related groups available were highlighted as positives in the feedback from delegates.

“Recovery has changed but for the better.”

5.3 Gaps in Recovery Support

There was acknowledgement that there has been a huge amount of progress in how support is provided to people in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. However, delegates highlighted that there is still much the ADP can do to help provide support to people in recovery in North Ayrshire.

5.4 Recovery Communities

While there are some opportunities for people in the community to come together and support one another in recovery, a recurring theme in the feedback was the need the development and investment in more recovery-based activities across North Ayrshire. One group noted that there was lots of groups, but all had relatively low attendances. Another highlighted that there was little provision after 5pm and at the weekend. Additionally, a group identified a gap in the provision of more therapeutic support for people e.g., outdoor activities/hill walking.

5.5 Communication and Co-ordination

It has been highlighted that the ADP feels quite disjointed and there is a need for better co-ordination and required from the ADP in helping people and organisations to forge partnerships and work together to help develop sustainable, accessible, and appropriate opportunities for people in recovery in their community.

Feedback suggests that even when a recovery group is in existence it is the success of it is often reliant on people finding out via word of mouth. An overarching theme seems to be the absence of proper communication of those involved in recovery. Feedback indicates that delegates are frustrated as there is an appetite to work more collaboratively but the ADP need to support the process of doing so more effectively.

5.6 Funding

To support the development of opportunities for people in recovery this may require more financial investment from the ADP. A theme from the responses was the need to provide more funding for recovery-based activities across North Ayrshire.

There was an indication that a lot of the recovery activities are mainly held within Irvine and 3 Towns areas and more needs to be developed in other areas of North Ayrshire.

5.7 Accessibility

The accessibility of services was a clear theme in the feedback provided at the development day. There were a lot of responses that highlighted a gap in the lack of support available after 5pm and at the weekends for people who may require it.

It is evident that travel seems to be a barrier for a lot of people in North Ayrshire, whether it be to access appointments with statutory services or recovery groups within the community.

The ADP may have to give more consideration to committing funds to help develop more supports out with the traditional hours of service and to support people with travel. This highlights the need for supports to be accessible for people in their communities, when possible, to prevent accessibility being a barrier in recovery.

6.0 Justice Services

What we want to achieve:

Vulnerable people are diverted from the justice system, wherever possible and those in the justice system are fully supported.

6.1 Positive Working Relationships

The feedback in relation to support for people with issues related to alcohol and drugs involved in the justice system indicated that there a good working relationship across health and care services, police, prison services and the third sector with regards to providing support in this area.

NADARS have a positive working relationship with Justice Services. There are good links with campus police officers, and they can raise any concerns with justice social work services. Equally, any incidents that occur out with school the police are fully involved.

Families outside were identified as being a useful resource in being able to provide support to families. Education are now able to make referrals to Families Outside if they are supporting any children whose parents are in prison. Additionally, the police are also working alongside Turning Point Scotland to take referrals from custody suites.

There are robust assessment and care planning processes as well as positive throughcare support and pathways if someone is convicted. For young people, the MASH and Youth Justice Team are supporting young people into their 20s who are involved in the justice system.

6.2 Lived Experience

As with other areas of discussion throughout the day, having people with lived experience providing support to people within the justice system was recognised as being extremely valuable. Having that type of support available in prisons and within HSCP services has supported more people into recovery and helped with reducing the risk of reoffending. The responses indicated the existing resource should be built upon to help offer more support within prison settings and to people when liberated.

6.3 Local outcomes

From a strategic perspective, it was highlighted that the ADP have no identified outcomes related to Justice outlined within the strategy. There are national drivers and outcomes that can help inform this, but this is clearly an area for development.

There needs to clear focus for supporting people with alcohol or drug related support needs within the justice system which involves partners across the landscape e.g., social work, prisons, third sector organisations.

6.4 Pathways

As previously mentioned, the narrative and approach to supporting people with drug and alcohol related support needs may have to be challenged.

“You’ve got an addiction you need to get it seen to.”

We may have to consider our approach to help empower people into recovery. For example, people are referred to NADARS and attendance is mandatory as part of a Drug Testing and Treatment Order, which is designed to reduce drug use and related reoffending. It was again highlighted the valuable role Recovery Development Workers play in supporting to empower people into recovery for the right reasons.

Despite that, people identified the pathways from prison to rehab, referred to as turnaround, as being clear for males. However, there is a gap in provision of rehabilitation services for females. Overall, there is a consistent theme about understanding pathways and what support is available across the landscape of alcohol and drug support services from a justice perspective.

6.5 Opportunities for people

It was clear from the feedback that employment opportunities for people with a previous addiction issue and a criminal record are limited. For example, employment within a school or working with young people is ruled out. One response highlighted that schools should have more awareness of justice services to help support people and families in the system. It could be suggested involving people who have experience and have been successfully rehabilitated could be a good way of facilitating this.

As mentioned throughout the report, the investment in lived experience in this area could be integral to providing the most robust model of support possible in North Ayrshire. This could help people understand pathways and what support is available. Additionally, having good relationships with people and understanding this element of the recovery landscape could help the ADP to fund the appropriate diversionary activity for people in the community.

7.0 Alcohol

What we want to achieve:

Less harm is caused by alcohol.

The final discussion of the development day focused on alcohol and how we can work together to help reduce the harm caused to communities in North Ayrshire. It was acknowledged that there are differences in relation to how people view alcohol compared to drugs, but it is evident that people are equally concerned about the impact. The problems caused by alcohol in North Ayrshire remain at a high level and associated harms are detrimental and negatively impact on the residents and services within our community.

7.1 Strengths

Similarly with other areas of the discussion, the work of NADARS, Turning Point Scotland and Barnardo’s Stronger Families, and Harbour were highlighted as providing real value in helping to support people with alcohol related issues. Additionally, the CAST Team were praised for the work they do with young people who they themselves or their parents are

impacted by alcohol and drugs. All partners have good links with community supports and often link in to fellowships and recovery groups i.e., AA.

Residential rehabilitation through Ward 5 provide invaluable rehabilitation support to people in North Ayrshire at Woodland View, as well as linking people in with continued support as part of the pathway. Ward 5 can also be a starting point for the external rehabilitation pathway and provide continuity of treatment and support into local and national residential rehabilitation facilities.

With regards to training and education, the PSST were noted as providing robust information, training, and support around alcohol through, alcohol awareness training, ABI's, ARBD, drink spiking etc.

7.2 Gaps

The gaps and challenges around alcohol could be viewed as being slightly different to other drugs because it is legal, widely available, and in most cases relatively cheap to buy.

“If there is a birth, you have a drink. If there is a death, you have a drink.”

7.3 Culture

Delegates highlighted that alcohol does not seem to be treated with the same seriousness or significance as other drugs. There is a culture of acceptance around alcohol where it is glamourised and binge drinking, particularly in Scotland, is completely accepted. One group noting that, “What you drinking tonight?” is a perfectly acceptable question. While, if the same question was asked about drugs, it would most likely prompt a completely different reaction.

Moreover, the normalisation of alcohol is probably apparent to children, in most cases, from a very young age. The responses indicate that this may have to be challenged to help educate children and young people about the damage alcohol can potentially have both physically and mentally. It might be useful to identify or highlight if there is a link between alcohol usage and people completing suicide.

“Many people not always aware of the true harms of alcohol.”

7.4 Education and Marketing

Many of the responses stated that there are assumptions made about how much people know about the impact of alcohol. Suggestions on how we address the issue in a similar way to how we address speaking about drugs. One group stating that, “we need to be honest and upfront about drug and alcohol use and raise awareness at an early age”. Feedback again suggests utilising the voice of lived experience to share their story.

“Stop saying just don't touch it.”

The marketing of alcohol and advertisement is something that is being considered at a national policy level. There are various views about whether alcohol advertising, particularly in sport, should be banned to bring us in line with other European countries such as France. One group suggested should alcohol be locked in a cabinet similarly to the way cigarettes are to make it less accessible. Stricter marketing laws would make it more difficult for companies to target a younger age group, for example with drinks like Dragon Soup. Equally, should more resources or campaigns be invested in to prevent younger people purchasing alcohol?

7.5 Support

As identified with other areas, there is a need for support to be made more available in evenings and weekends. A recognised gap in recovery activity which helps to meet people's social needs but out with settings where alcohol and/or drugs may be a temptation. For example, in Glasgow there is an alcohol-free recovery event called 'Free'd Up' on a Saturday. Responses indicate that provision for something like this in Ayrshire could be welcome.

In relation to the accessibility of support for statutory services, it was again highlighted the need for more information on how to access support for alcohol related issues. Particularly for support like residential rehab with one group stating the criteria for alcohol detox and the waiting times and criteria for rehab as being a barrier. In addition, one group added that there may be unrealistic expectations surrounding rehab.

Finally, delegates observed that a lot of resource was being directed towards tackling drug deaths, when in reality alcohol deaths are as much of a concern. The responses indicate that more attention and resources should be given to alcohol in helping to address the issues equitably and properly.

8.0 Event Feedback

We asked delegates to provide us with general feedback on their thoughts of the day. Responses were predominantly very positive, and people seemed to enjoy having the opportunity to connect and have the dedicated time to think about the direction of their ADP. Naturally, there were some areas for development identified regarding the format of the day and a suggestion of providing some information prior, all of which will be considered for future events like this.

"It is clear there is a willingness to work together to improve opportunities and supports."

"I loved the full day. I really hope it is the start of change which is very much needed."

"It was really useful being at a table with people from different backgrounds. This event has really made me think about how I deliver our service more inclusively."

“Listening to the people with lived experience really gave me hope that together we can work to make a difference to the lives of young people in North Ayrshire.”

9.0 Conclusion

The purpose of hosting a development day was to support the ADP to understand the landscape of alcohol and drug provision across North Ayrshire from a grassroots perspective. The information and feedback gathered from participants will help refocus the work of the ADP, support the development of an action plan for each focus area, and start to inform the overall strategic direction of the ADP.

Feedback from delegates indicate people agreed there was value and a need for having an event to give people the opportunity to come together to discuss our strengths, gaps, and ideas on how we can better coordinate joint working in North Ayrshire.

Each discussion has enabled us to identify themes which will be able to help shape further discussion focusing on building on our strengths and developing solutions around areas identified for improvement. For example, improving communication and information sharing among ADP partners, accessibility of support and recovery activity, ensuring people with lived experience are included and able to play an active part in the direction and focus of the ADP i.e., informing the development and investment in recovery communities.

In conclusion, the development day was a successful in helping the ADP to understand the landscape and determine how people are feeling about North Ayrshire’s approach to tackling alcohol and drug misuse. It was clear there was motivation from all partners to improve how we work together and collaborate to help address the areas for development identified. The ADP has a responsibility to support the facilitation of opportunities for all partners to work collaboratively to help provide support, information, and education to help reduce the impact of problem alcohol and drug use in North Ayrshire.