

## **Section 9 The Housing Drug Advisor Project (HDA)**

To improve a shared understanding of need, and to help further identify and promote practice (with a focus in England), the Home Office and Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) seconded three housing and drug advisors from October 2006 until March 2008<sup>1</sup>. The advisors were appointed from the housing and drug sectors respectively and their work was supported by a national working group and findings from recent guidance practice and reports.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the advisers' posts, the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) were supporting the Department of Health (DH) and National Treatment Agency (NTA) on the implementation of the Tier 4 capital programme on residential rehabilitation and supported housing.

The Housing Drugs Advisers project works across government departments with initially one Adviser being based in each of the following departments:

- CLG (Housing Strategy and Support Directorate) (until March 2007)
- HO (Drug Interventions Programme) and
- Ministry of Justice - NOMS (Commissioning and Partnerships Directorate)

### **Aim and Scope of the Project**

To identify how the housing needs of drug users, including drug misusing offenders, were integrated at a national, regional and local level in order to prevent homelessness amongst drug users.

To identify what is in place nationally, regionally and locally that could improve understanding of need, unmet need achieved through looking at what national, regional and local data and information is available, how it is used and whether it can help to map access, availability, appropriateness of housing provision and related support for the client group: in England (Oct 06-Jan 07)

### **OUTCOMES FOR PROJECT**

- The identification of the strategic linkages, data collection mechanisms and joint ways of working in place nationally, regionally and locally
- Improve the shared understanding of need, unmet need and gaps in provision.
- Identify and promote practice and partnership working that provide practical solutions in tackling homelessness for drug misusers which can inform both commissioning and delivery of approaches to housing, care and support.
- Communicate and promote two way feedback about practice and findings through facilitating and speaking at or attending local/regional/national seminars
- Where appropriate, facilitate joint working and network opportunities locally and regionally (as part of the work programme)

The work was undertaken in two phases:

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<sup>1</sup> Two advisors worked from April 2007 onwards.

## **Phase 1**

The initial phase of the advisors' work was undertaken between November 2006 and March 2007. Making use of available national and regional information, they focused on identifying the strategic linkages, data collection mechanisms and joint ways of working that were in place nationally and regionally to support positive housing outcomes for drug users. Information and findings were used to inform the second phase of the project and have been updated and included within the relevant sections of this practice paper.

## **Phase 2**

The second phase, undertaken between September – January 2008, focused on identifying selected practice initially described within the context of a 'comprehensive framework' that could inform and help housing and drug partnerships and providers strategically plan, commission and deliver a planned system of housing care and support for drug users. It was informed by a national working group comprised of national and regional stakeholders from housing and homelessness and drug sector. (See Acknowledgments page for national group). Given the time available to complete the 'fieldwork' it is important to note that this work was a sample of practice as identified by stakeholders in England, that could demonstrate a broad range of outcomes which support commissioning, planning and delivery of housing for drug users.

## **Methodology**

The aim of the fieldwork was to look at practice that demonstrates solutions that could be used to help housing and drug partnerships and providers strategically plan, commission and deliver a planned system of housing for drug users. Furthermore, the objective was also to look at the processes for collection of practice.

## **Selection of field work areas**

The field work programme was informed by a national working group with representatives from both the Housing and Drug Sector. They helped to identify potential areas of practice that could help inform housing and drug partnerships and providers strategically plan, commission and deliver a planned system of housing for drug users. To build on existing knowledge so far, examples identified ranged from provision for those continuing to use drugs through to those who wished to remain abstinent. They were also 'assessed' on what lessons and experience they may be able to add in terms of strategic planning, delivery and service user involvement.

## **Process**

Following identification and selection of partnerships and projects they were initially contacted and invited to take part in the project. Information about the project work was disseminated through two leaflets: a general leaflet which focused on a broad description of the project : a specific leaflet for those taking part in the fieldwork visits Prior to each fieldwork visit, the advisors sent this leaflet alongside a set of the questions that would be used to inform a structured interview,

Follow up phone calls were also used to check out and clarify information on how and why the project was being undertaken. It was planned that each interview would take no longer than two hours. In order that the feedback from the interviews best represented what was shared, each fieldwork area was sent a write up of the interview, to agree and arrange sign off on behalf of their organisation or partnership. This was identified as important as the information gathered would be shared widely such as on the Governments' drugs website [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk)

### **Structured Interviews**

The purpose of the interview was to collect information from key stakeholders, The interviews took the form of a two hour information gathering exercise carried out on the premises of the service provider. The key stakeholders were identified by the partnership or organisation. For the sake of consistency, a framework of questions was drawn up which had a strategic and operational focus. These were drafted in consultation with the national working group, and amended after an initial 'test visit' . The field work interviews were completed at the end of January 2008. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this practice paper set out the comprehensive framework, the findings and the case studies in more detail.

### **Supporting information**

See the following attachments to this section for the question framework and leaflets used

**Section 9a** - Questions for Interviewees employed in organisations holding a strategy development / management remit

**Section 9b** - Questions for Interviewees employed in organisations holding a service delivery remit

**Section 9c** - Identifying and Promoting Practice in Housing for Drug Users: General Information Leaflet 31/08/07

**Section 9d** - Identifying and Promoting Practice in Housing for Drug Users: Information Leaflet for Interviewees 31/08/2007