

Cabinet 27 th November 2019	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Denise Radley – Corporate Director Health, Adults and Community	Classification: Unrestricted
Refresh of Tower Hamlets Substance Misuse Strategy 2020-2025	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities Councillor Amina Ali Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Originating Officer(s)	Marion Morris – Policy Manager – Substance Misuse
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Forward Plan Notice Published	7 th May 2019
Reason for Key Decision	Impact on Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 1 People are aspirational, independent, and have equal access to opportunities Priority 2 A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

Executive Summary

The Substance Misuse Partnership strategy sets out the strategic direction for tackling substance misuse over the next five years for adults and young people in Tower Hamlets (2020-2025). It is Tower Hamlets third Substance Misuse Strategy and re-confirms the commitment of the council and its partners to tackle the issue.

The primary focus of the strategy is on the use of Class A drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine. This is the type of drug use most associated with the use of drugs in public places and the significant open drug market and accounts for up to 90% of resident complaints to the council. The class A drug market also acts as a driver for violence, including knife crime and the criminal and sexual exploitation of young people. This does not however preclude consideration of other types of drug use such as khat use in the Somali community, high strength cannabis use (skunk) use by younger people, alcohol, poly drug use and chem-sex all of which feature in the strategy. The strategy seeks to encourage and promote a culture of responsible drinking and the responsible management of licensed premises to reduce alcohol related harms to those who drink and the wider community. The cross cutting nature of substance misuse means that both the Community Safety Partnership Board and

the Health and Wellbeing Board have an interest in the strategy, although formal accountability for delivery sits with the Community Safety Partnership Board.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership Substance Misuse Strategy attached at appendix 1.
2. To note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 9 and the actions that will be taken to mitigate these.
3. To note that the strategy will be underpinned by detailed annual delivery plans. It will be officially launched in January 2020 when an online version and a printed version of the strategy will be made available to residents.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Under section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) there is an obligation to formulate and implement strategies (with other specified authorities) that reduce crime and disorder, combat the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and reduce re-offending.
- 1.2 Although the Community Safety Strategy fulfils this statutory function, the Substance Misuse strategy articulates the overall vision for reducing drug and alcohol related harms in Tower Hamlets and provides an overarching framework and direction over the next five years.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The option of not developing an overarching strategy was considered. However, given that Tower Hamlets has a significant drug and alcohol problem and the degree of resident concern around substance misuse, an overarching strategy is necessary to forge a partnership approach to tackling substance misuse in the borough.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Background

- 3.1 Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) places a duty on the Community Safety Partnership to formulate and implement a) a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area (including anti-social and other

behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); b) a strategy for combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area and c) a strategy for the reduction of re-offending in the area.

- 3.2 The Substance Misuse Strategy specifically addresses point b) of this duty (combatting the misuse of drugs and alcohol) and a) the reduction of crime - where crime is related to drugs or alcohol use and c) where re-offending is linked to drug use.

4 DEFINING SUBSTANCE MISUSE

- 4.1 Substance misuse is the act of regularly taking one or more drugs in order to change mood, emotion or state of consciousness. Throughout this strategy, substance misuse is taken to include illicit drugs, the abuse of prescription drugs, new psychoactive substances (NPS) such as nitrous oxide, and alcohol. It does not include tobacco. While the primary focus of this strategy is on drug and alcohol use that causes the most harm to individual users and the wider community, it also covers increasing risk drinking and recreational drug use.

5 HOW THE SUBSTANCE MISUSE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

- 5.1 The Substance Misuse Strategy was developed following consultation with residents, including parents of teenagers, our partners across health, the voluntary sector, the police, London Community Rehabilitation Company; Interfaith Forum, LGBT Forum, senior staff across the council and people who use drug and alcohol support services. It is supported by best practice and evidence.
- 5.2 A variety of consultation methods were used from semi-structured interviews, an on-line resident survey, a drop-in at the Whitechapel Idea Store, attendance at key Ward Panels and a focus group with parents of teenagers. A workshop with the Mayors Advisory Board and an Appreciative Enquiry session with the Partnership Executive Group were also undertaken. The Consultation Report is included as a link to this report.

6 VISION

- 6.1 The overarching vision of the strategy is to **'reduce drug and alcohol-related harms to individuals, families and communities in Tower Hamlets and to enable more of our residents to recover from problematic substance misuse'**.

7 APPROACH

- 7.1 The strategy recognises that substance misuse is both a criminal justice and a public health issue and that factors such as poverty, unemployment and social deprivation are significant risk factors for the development of problematic

substance misuse. The contribution that other council strategies and policies can play in tackling wider determinants of health which impact on substance misuse is key to the success of the strategy along with working with residents in co-production and problem solving.

- 7.2 The strategy is informed by an evidence based Harm Reduction approach which aims to minimise negative health and social impacts associated with drugs or alcohol use and support people in recovery from substance misuse. The use of appropriate enforcement and regulatory interventions/ services is also a key to delivery and success along with the involvement of residents.

8 PRIORITIES

Priority 1 Early Intervention and Prevention

Priority 2 Evidence based treatment and recovery support

Priority 3 Reducing Drug and Alcohol related harm and anti-social behaviour.

9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An Equalities Assurance Checklist was conducted and concluded that there was no need to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment as the strategy is not proposing any fundamental changes. Equality issues which were identified are addressed in the body of the strategy. **Gender:** the need to increase access to treatment for women in general and pregnant women in particular, women experiencing domestic abuse and those involved in street based prostitution.
- 9.2 **Sexual orientation and transgender:** The LGBT community are one of the 'at risk' groups for substance misuse and experience higher levels of mental health problems than the general population. There is also some evidence of higher rates of alcohol use among lesbian and bisexual women. Work to improve access to substance misuse treatment for gay men and men who have sex with men who are involved in chem sex is one the strategy's objectives. The strategy also aims to promote greater use of alcohol screening both through online 'DrinkCoach' and in person through Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice (IBA). Sexual orientation and gender identity monitoring in all services, and staff training in relation to the needs of the LGBT+ community will be undertaken.
- 9.3 **Ethnicity:** The ethnic profile of people accessing substance misuse services is broadly reflective of the boroughs profile. The stigma associated with substance misuse can make it difficult to have open conversations for religious or cultural reasons within the Bangladeshi and Somali communities. We will be encouraging more open conversations with all residents through a planned Anti-Stigma Campaign, greater community involvement and a series of Information and Advice leaflets in Bengali and Somali for the older population of parents, or grand-parents who may not speak English. More

generally we will be working in partnership with agencies in contact with the South Asian community e.g. Mosques, the third sector and other inter-faith groups to improve uptake of services and ensure all communities understand the risks associated with drug and alcohol use. We will also be reviewing how we can better meet the needs of the Somali Community as per the recommendations of the Somali Task Force and findings of the Substance Misuse Needs Assessment.

- 9.4 **Disability:** 47% of those who started adult treatment in Tower Hamlets have an identified mental health need, which is higher than the England average. The strategy aims to improve access to mainstream mental health services and to improve the Dual Diagnosis offer within substance misuse services.

10 **OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 **This** section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 10.2 **Consultation** – whilst not a statutory requirement the following consultation was undertaken and has informed the commitments and actions in the strategy as in 5-5.2 above
- 10.3 **Safeguarding:** The Tower Hamlets Adult Safeguarding Board and The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children’s Board work in partnership around safeguarding issues that pertinent to substance misuse for vulnerable adults and children. All commissioned substance misuse services have appointed Safeguarding leads.
- 10.4 **Risk Management** following the recent re-tender of the adult substance misuse treatment service it is anticipated that there may be a dip in performance, which is not unusual following a re-tendering process. This will be closely monitored.

11 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 11.1 In 2019-20 the Council's gross budgeted expenditure directly attributable to substance misuse is £7.7m.
- 11.2 There are no immediate direct financial implications from the recommendations of this report. The activities considered necessary to deliver the strategy will need to be given financial consideration when the annual delivery plan is constructed and factored in to the annual MTFS refresh.

12 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 12.1 The proposed strategy complies with the Council's duties under section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which requires the Community Safety Partnership to formulate and implement a strategy or combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area and a strategy for the reduction of re-offending in the area. Additionally, section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 places a duty on the Council to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area.
- 12.2 In carrying out its functions, the council must comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 Equality Act 2010, namely it must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices

- Substance Misuse Strategy – Appendix 1

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

<https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IssueId=93739&OptionNum=0>

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