



SOUTH BELFAST PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Public Health Agency,
Lisburn Health Centre,
Linenhall Street,
Lisburn,
BT28 1LU

Thursday 18th April 2013

Dear Joan Crossey,

The South Belfast Partnership Board is a Board which brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle in partnership the economic, social and environmental problems which affect people in the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast.

Please find attached our response to the Alcohol and Drugs Commissioning Framework for Northern Ireland 2013-16. This response has been prepared by the South Belfast Partnership Board in consultation with a number of local community groups in particular FASA (Forum for Alcohol and Substance Abuse) and Lower Ormeau Residence Action Group.

In addition to this response we would like to add the following general points about the framework: -

- We are generally supportive of the priorities and outcomes within the framework
- We feel there is a great need to acknowledge that many of the outcomes are long-term in nature (and recognising that it is a 3-year framework) and achieving them will be challenging in the face of today's culture regarding alcohol particularly
- There is a great need to address availability, affordability and accessibility and to look at practice-based evidence
- Recognition needs to be given to the fact that the framework is seeking to change attitudes and behaviour that have become deeply engrained in our

South Belfast Partnership

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culture- the service response i.e. early intervention work therefore needs to acknowledge the culture

- We believe it is important that this framework sits within the context of the Public Health Strategy and all the strategies need to link together be effective
- The focus on Integrated Care Pathways (Transforming Your Care) and partnership working is most welcome and vital but this needs to be within a context where all organisations and agencies are clear about their roles within the pathway and that each of the roles are recognised and valued
- The framework will require resources especially within the Community and Voluntary Sector as outcomes cannot be achieved if contracts are year on year. We are pleased to see that the framework is offering a 3 year opportunity which will give security and stability to enable this sector to plan
- Finally, evaluation and monitoring the impact/changes is key to this framework succeeding so we hope that value has been placed on these stages of programme development

From a South Belfast perspective we would like to add the following points:

- We feel that the current key issues in south Belfast are (1) Drugs and alcohol and young people and the effect on the family circle, (2) Drugs and alcohol on family and (3) children
- There is an over prescribing culture, black market (medication from the doctor and the street), high dependency/reliance on drugs and a strong reliance on prescription drugs with alternatives not being available
- The main target groups are Young People, Adults and Older People. We feel the document focuses a lot on young people and not the other two. In addition, there needs to be more of an emphasis on males as well
- There is a need for evidence based practice and practice based evidence and the streamlining and joining of services – the service should be fit for purpose
- It is acknowledged that grandparents also play a role in children's lives
- Within south Belfast we have the highest proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic communities, including the recently arrived Roma who do not have direct access to health services. This in turn can create a risk around the access to, and use of prescription drugs with sometimes serious outcomes and consequences

- Students, as a target group, cannot be excluded even though they are a very transient. There is a presence throughout south Belfast attending both universities and further education
- There is a great need to focus on a cultural shift – the culture is not challenged in today’s society

Gaps in the Framework were also identified which include:

- The social isolation of adults
- Recovery and aftercare
- The need to increase awareness of GP’s knowledge of addictions
- The need for plans to be localised and flexible
- The acknowledgement that some individuals require a longer-term approach to treatment and programmes should be adapted to cater for this e.g. befriending and mentoring
- The acknowledgement that some individuals don’t require a long term approach, they need to move on and to be referred in to programmes within their local community

We trust that you find these general comments, south specific comments and identified gaps useful and we look forward to seeing how they help shape the commissioning framework in due course.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the matters raised within this response with the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social care Board so please don’t hesitate to contact my colleague Una Lappin on 02890 244 070 or unalappin@southbelfast.org if you would like any further information or clarity in relation to any of our comments.

Yours sincerely



Briega Arthurs
Chief Executive
South Belfast Partnership Board