

# SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE ON SUBSTANCE MISUSE

## KEY FACTS

- Around 4 million people use at least one illicit drug each year and around 1 million people use at least one of the most dangerous drugs (such as ecstasy, heroin and cocaine) classified as Class A.
- There are around 250,000 'problematic' drug users in England and Wales.
- Drug misuse gives rise to between £10 billion and £18 billion a year in social and economic costs.
- Volatile substance abuse (VSA), the deliberate inhalation of volatile substances such as lighter fuel, glue or aerosols, is responsible for more deaths in young people aged 10 to 16 in England and Wales than illegal drugs.

### Inequalities exist

- A study found that two in five of the homeless young people interviewed had used heroin, and just under a quarter of those who had used drugs said they had overdosed.
- A study found that over 75% of rough sleepers in London has used a drug and around a half of rough sleepers were dependent on a drug.

## WE ARE NOW GOING TO...

### Children and young people – starting on the right path

- Fund a three-year *Young People's Development Programme* to pilot ways of reducing substance misuse (as well as improving sexual health and reducing teenage pregnancy), particularly among vulnerable young people.

Health Development Agency evidence briefings summarise evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to promote health, and include *Drug Use Prevention Among Young People* (2004) ([www.hda.nhs.uk/Documents/drug\\_use\\_prevention\\_summary.pdf](http://www.hda.nhs.uk/Documents/drug_use_prevention_summary.pdf))

## WHAT THE CONSULTATION TOLD US

The most common subjects raised in submissions on substance misuse were information provision and services such as rehabilitation centres, needle exchanges and 'one-stop shops'. Other issues raised included drug supply, changing the law, different drug treatments, anti-drug campaigns, and drug education in schools from an early age.

## WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

- The Updated Drugs Strategy, launched in 2002 by the Home Secretary, ([www.drugs.gov.uk/ReportsandPublications/NationalStrategy/1038840683](http://www.drugs.gov.uk/ReportsandPublications/NationalStrategy/1038840683)) sets revised targets on drugs. An additional £457 million over three years were allocated in 2002, bringing expenditure on tackling drugs to £1.4 billion in 2005–06.

### Young people

- Support for parents, carers and families so they can easily access advice, help, counselling and mutual support. The FRANK campaign aims to inform young people and their parents, carers and families about the effects and risks of taking illicit drugs. It gives people advice and support and provides details of drug services. There is a helpline (0800 77 66 00) and interactive website ([www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)).
- Outreach and community treatment for vulnerable young people.
- Testing and referrals into treatment within the youth justice system.
- By 2006 we will be able to provide support to 40–50,000 vulnerable young people a year.

### Supply

- Increasing cooperation with countries to tackle key drug supply routes and distribution.
- Targeting the 'middle markets' and strengthening policy to disrupt local markets.
- Increasing the recovery of drug-related criminal assets. We have established an Asset Recovery Agency in order to do this.
- *Tackling Crack: A National Plan* was published by the Home Office in December 2002 with the aim of putting crack onto the agenda of local delivery agencies.

## Treatment

- Expansion of treatment services, improved treatment for crack and cocaine, heroin prescribing for all those who would benefit from it and improved access to GP medical services. We are on track to increase the numbers in drug treatment by 100% by 2008.
- In 2001, the Government set up the National Treatment Agency (NTA) to increase the availability and effectiveness of drug treatment, and for the first time set waiting time targets. Since then, average waiting times have fallen in all treatment categories.
- *Models of Care* gives guidance on best practice to drug treatment services.
- The Government launched an action plan to prevent drug-related deaths in 2001, focusing on surveillance and monitoring of deaths as well as research.
- Over 90% of PCTs operate a needle exchange scheme.

## Crime

- Services to improve community access to treatment and ensure those leaving prison and treatment avoid a return to crime or addiction.
- A major expansion of services within the criminal justice system to get drug misusing offenders into treatment.

## WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF...

...we 'reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs, including substantially increasing the number of drug misusing offenders entering treatment through the Criminal Justice System' (2004 Government PSA target).