Working Together To Reduce Harm

Substance Misuse Annual Report and Forward Look 2018
Introduction

In October 2008, the Welsh Government published its 10 year Substance Misuse Strategy Working Together to Reduce Harm. This strategy sets out a clear national agenda for tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales and has been supported by a series of detailed delivery plans which inform how the Welsh Government, in partnership, intends to implement the actions contained within the strategy. The latest delivery plan covers the period 2016-18.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the key activity across Wales during 2017/18 and identifies key challenges going forward, over the next 12 months.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Public Health Wales document: Data Mining Wales — The annual profile for substance misuse 2017-18. It is accessible from the Public Health Wales site: www.publichealthwales.org/substancemisuse and the Treatment Data – Substance Misuse in Wales 2017-18.


1 Both reports contain more detailed information in relation to the caveats surrounding the data presented in this report.

Mae’r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.
Developments during 2017/18

Substance misuse is a major health issue that affects the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The Welsh Government priorities for substance misuse are set out in our Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2016-18 which has been collated following significant consultation with a range of key stakeholders.

Published in September 2016, the plan details action points for each of the key aims in the 10 year Substance Misuse Strategy and explains what we will do to improve the outcomes of those affected by substance misuse. [gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/substancemisuse/publications/dplan/?lang=en](gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/substancemisuse/publications/dplan/?lang=en)

Progress against the 2016-18 delivery plan is monitored via an internal Welsh Government Programme Board and an external Partnership Board which meets twice a year.

The Welsh Government’s aim is to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse to enable them to make informed choices and to know where they can seek out help and support. We continue to invest almost £50 million annually to deliver the commitments in our 10-year substance misuse strategy.

Some key achievements against objectives from the 2017 Annual Report

Commissioned a ‘review’ conducted by Figure 8, of the 10 Year Substance misuse Strategy Working Together to reduce harm 2008-2018 which has been completed to gain an understanding of how the strategy has contributed to tackling the harms associated within substance misuse. This was published in April 2018 and highlights positive achievements over the lifetime of the strategy. [gov.wales/statistics-and-research/review-working-together-reduce-harm/?lang=en](gov.wales/statistics-and-research/review-working-together-reduce-harm/?lang=en)

Supported Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) in completing a 12 month review in July 2018. This assessed the quality and safety of substance misuse services across Wales. The final report has been an important element in broadly assessing the implementation of the strategy, alongside the Figure 8 report, but more specifically the application of the National Core Standards for Substance Misuse services.

Progressed the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill to receive Royal assent on August 9th 2018.
Education and Awareness

Preventing future substance misuse is as important as treating the established problem and we want everyone to be aware in Wales of the consequences of misusing drugs or alcohol, or about where they can seek help and support. Projects to educate and raise awareness include:

Dan 24/7

Dan 24/7 is a free and bilingual telephone drugs helpline providing a single point of contact for anyone in Wales wanting further information or help relating to drugs or alcohol.

In 2017/18 there were 5,151 calls to DAN 24/7, a 26% increase on 2016/17. Traffic to the website has also increased by 92% during the same timeframe.

Welsh Government, in conjunction with our national helpline DAN 24/7 developed a new initiative across Wales to get to those hard to reach areas. This initiative utilises a van with digital display enabling us to spread messages, allowing us to react quickly to any current trends, warnings in relation to drug use and provide both educational and harm reduction information. In addition, the campaign also promotes the national DAN 24/7 helpline.

Social media continues to be important in both raising awareness of the national DAN 24/7 helpline and in getting harm reduction messages out to target groups. It has proved to be especially useful in providing drug alerts, links to drug information on the DAN 24/7 website when an area has a problem with a specific drug and also in engaging with other services across Wales.

In 2017/18, Facebook followers show a 12% increase across the year and a 5% increase during the main months of the digital campaign. Twitter follows also show an increase over the year of 20% with a 7% increase during the main months of the digital campaign.

The Dan 24/7 website can be accessed via the following link: www.dan247.org.uk

Support in Schools / Children and Young People

SchoolBeat.org is a bilingual site from the All-Wales School Liaison Core Programme, providing information and resources for teachers, pupils and parents to follow up on the lessons provided to primary and secondary school children by our School Community Police Officers.

For the academic year 2017/18, 100% of schools in Wales were accessed under the All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme.

www.schoolbeat.org
Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 provides a legislative basis for addressing the longstanding and specific health concerns around the effects of excess alcohol consumption — to improve and protect the health of the population of Wales. Put simply, price matters. Evidence demonstrates that the excessive intake of alcohol causes harm and the likelihood of harm is proportionate to the amount of alcohol consumed. There is also a link between drinking at harmful levels and the availability of cheap alcohol.

The Act will introduce a minimum price for alcohol supplied in Wales and make it an offence for alcohol to be supplied below that price. A minimum price will set a floor price, meaning that alcohol could not be sold or supplied below that price. It will not increase the price of every drink, only those which are currently sold or supplied at below any minimum price. Under the Act, the applicable minimum price will be calculated by combining the Minimum Unit Price, the strength of the alcohol and its volume. This formula specifically allows us to target those drinks currently sold at an unacceptably low price relative to their alcohol content.

The Act states that the MUP will be specified in regulations. The Welsh Government is consulting on draft regulations and its preferred initial level of the MUP of 50p. Subject to the approval of the National Assembly, the current intention is that minimum pricing will be implemented from summer 2019 onwards. Further information and guidance to support implementation will be made available ahead of then. Welsh Government will be working with retailers and local authorities to support implementation and promote awareness of the requirements of the legislation. The Welsh Government will also be undertaking an evaluation of the new law. This will help assess its impact ahead of making a decision about whether to continue to have a minimum price for alcohol, after a period of five years.

gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/minimum-price/?lang=en
gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/guidance/drinking-guidelines/?lang=en
DeddflaA.MUPAct@gov.wales
Harm Reduction

Our approach to tackling substance misuse in Wales is based on the core principle of harm reduction, by enabling, encouraging and supporting substance users to reduce the harms they may be causing to themselves, their families and communities. There are a number of harm reduction initiatives in place including:

Take home Naloxone

Naloxone is an emergency antidote to opiate overdose. It blocks opioid receptors to counteract the effects of opioid drugs (such as heroin, methadone and morphine), reversing the life-threatening effects of an overdose such as depressed breathing. Since 2011, the Welsh Government has successfully rolled out a programme to distribute Take home Naloxone kits, following a successful pilot project launched in 2009 and an independent evaluation. This programme will remain a key developmental priority.

Take Home Naloxone Kits Issued In 2017-18:

- Resupplied following use: 1,689
- New individuals: 1,372 (a decrease of 5.4% from 2016/17)
- Number reportedly used in overdose: 533

Needle Syringe Programmes

One of the more serious outcomes of drug use, especially injecting drug use, is chronic infection with blood borne viruses like Hepatitis C and HIV.

Needle Syringe programme provide needles and other drug related paraphernalia to people who inject drugs, including image and performance enhancing drugs.

The main aim of needle and syringe programmes is to reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses and other infections caused by sharing injecting equipment, such as HIV, hepatitis B and C. In turn, this will reduce the prevalence of blood-borne viruses and bacterial infections, so benefiting wider society.

During 2017/18 the total number of individuals accessing Needle Syringe Programmes was 25,190
**Image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs)**

Use of steroids and other image and performance enhancing drugs is widespread and increasing across the UK. Wales has been at the forefront in responding to this trend and the risks involved in using these types of drugs by:

- Providing evidence-based harm reduction advice and information via the website: [www.ipedinfo.co.uk](http://www.ipedinfo.co.uk), with over 3,000 individuals accessing the site each month in 2017-18;

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**WEDINOS**

WEDINOS is a project to provide a system for the collection and testing of new psychoactive substances and combinations of substances, providing rapid and accurate information to individuals and organisations to reduce harms and provide pragmatic harm reduction advice. Since 2013 a total of 9,149 samples have been received, from across all seven health board areas.

383 substances have been identified in combination and isolation.

[www.wedinos.org](http://www.wedinos.org)
• Over 680 participants in 2016-17, the largest survey of its kind in the UK. The IPED survey is now undertaken every 3 years. During 2017-18, qualitative research has been undertaken both with IPED users and providers of services to evidence the facilitators and barriers to health care access.

• Providing training to relevant professionals and to schools across Wales via the IPED toolkit for young people aged 11-16. www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/75064

The Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse (APoSM)

In December 2017, the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse (APoSM) published a report on ‘Enhanced Harm Reduction Centres’ which provides an overview of the current evidence that is available on Enhanced Harm Reduction Centres (EHRCs). The report contains one recommendation that further research is needed in relation to this subject.

The APoSM report can be accessed on the Welsh Government website at the following link: gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/report-on-enhanced-harm-reduction-centres.pdf

However, as the statement on the Welsh Government’s web-site highlights, our position is this is not a straightforward issue and there are significant concerns about the compatibility of EHRCs with current criminal law relating to the misuse of drugs. The law in this area is a matter for the UK Government and its enforcement is a matter for the police.
High quality treatment is the most effective way of improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of problematic substance users. The provision of support ranges from basic harm minimisation and other advice; to detoxification, residential care and relapse prevention.

**Referrals**

There were 23,876 referrals into substance misuse services during 2017-18 and a further 2,607 referrals who did not attend prior to assessment.

In 2017-18 the number of clients assessed for problematic drug use was 8,419 (47%) and compared with 9,295 (52%) assessed for problematic alcohol use.

**Assessments**

The total number of clients assessed by specialist substance misuse providers in 2017-18 was 17,776 down 3.5% from 2016-17.

- **Heroin** assessments accounted for 17.3%.
- **Cannabis** assessments accounted for 10.9%.
- **Cocaine** accounted for 5.2% of all assessments.

Males accounted for 62.6% of alcohol assessments and 70.3% of drug assessments.
Treatment

14% of clients Did Not Attend (DNA) treatment or the contact ended before treatment began following the assessment stage.

The total number of clients starting treatment in 2017-18 was 15,617, down by 5.6% on 2016-17.

WAITING TIMES:
Target of 80% of people to access Treatment within 20 working days of referral.

During 2017/18 overall 90.9% of people accessed services within 20 working days of referral.

### Alcohol
- 90% in treatment within 20 days

### Heroin
- 93% in treatment within 20 days

### Cannabis
- 89% in treatment within 20 days

### Amphetamines
- 92% in treatment within 20 days

### Cocaine
- 93% in treatment within 20 days

Treatment Outcomes

86.5% of people reported a reduction in their substance misuses in 2016/17 compared to 85.9% in 2013/14.

84.9% of people reported improved quality of life in 2017/18 compared to 92.3% in 2013/14.

77.0% of people have completed treatment either problematic substance free or have reached their treatment goals in 2017/18 compared to 71.83 in 2013/14.
Recovery

Recovery can be defined as “a process in which the difficulties associated with substance misuse are eliminated or significantly reduced and the resulting personal improvement becomes sustainable”. In Wales we fund and offer a wide range of evidence-based services and interventions in a range of settings throughout the substance misuse treatment system including:

**Recovery Orientated Integrated Systems of Care (ROISC) guidance and training**

The Recovery Orientated Integrated Systems of Care (ROISC) guidance sets out how providers can offer services and interventions to maximise the opportunity for service users to engage in appropriate support and treatment, thereby enabling them to make changes in their behaviour to improve their overall chances of recovery.

gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/131023substanceframeworken.pdf

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Alcohol clients have received specific Health and Recovery Support Interventions.

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**824** 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿 🌿

Drug clients have received specific Health and Recovery Support Interventions.

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**Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service**

The OoWS operates across all of Wales and is open to people who live in Wales, aged 16-24 and not in employment, education or training (NEET), or aged 25+ and long-term unemployed or economically inactive. A key aim of the OoWS is to support participants into employment or education, or to measurably improve their labour market position. The key barrier for participants to working or to education is a history of substance misuse and/or mental ill-health. Because of this focus, the OoWS is a specialist programme catering to those who cannot or will not engage with mainstream services, or for whom mainstream services are not suitable.

The OoWS combines pre-employment engagement, peer mentoring, and employment-focused support, and works with stakeholders including healthcare professionals and employers.

At a total cost of £17.3 million, the OoWS is jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Welsh Government with contributions from Area Planning Boards (via the Substance Misuse Action Fund). The OoWS will support up to 14,100 people across Wales in their recovery from substance misuse (including alcohol) and mental ill-health by the summer of 2020.
Cyfle Cymru consortium led by Cais: North Wales, Gwent, Powys, Western Bay, Dyfed.

Gofal in partnership with NewLink Wales: Cardiff and Vale, Cwm Taf.

The two suppliers procured to deliver the service in Wales are:

Outcomes

6,722 participants by end of Year 2:

2,913 recovering from Substance Misuse only

2,787 recovering from both Substance Misuse and Mental ill-health

1,022 recovering from Mental ill-health only

ESF results

The total number of participants engaged in Job search upon leaving at the end of Year 2 were 342

The total number of participants gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving at the end of Year 2 were 1,523

The total number of participants who entered employment, including self-employment, upon leaving by the end of Year 2 were 342

The OoWS also offers transitional support for up to three months to participants who find work, and can support employers who are looking for advice and support around good practice.
The total number of participants completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity by the end of Year 2 were 365.

The total number of participants in employment, including self employment six months after leaving at the end of Year 2 was 83.

Further details on the Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service is available at: gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/substancemisuse/service/?lang=en

**In work support project**

Through ESF match funding with WEFO, the Welsh Government has now secured a cash boost of nearly £9.5m to continue the delivery of the In Work Support Service until December 2022, a vital project that promotes health and well-being in the workplace and breaks down barriers to employment for those with physical or mental health conditions.

The service provides free and rapid access to occupational therapy designed to help people with mental or physical health conditions to remain in employment. It is available in North and West Wales.

The new funding will significantly expand the scheme to support up to 12,000 more people stay in work and 2,500 more businesses to build a healthy workplace. The service will also be widened to encompass more employees in rural areas, and will look to increase engagement with local small business networks and local health services to promote the service. www.healthyworkingwales.wales.nhs.uk/news/40371

To date over 3,500 participants have been supported through the project.
Reducing availability

There are a number of projects which help tackle the harms associated with substance misuse related crime and anti-social behaviour, and we have taken action to tackle the availability of illegal drugs and the inappropriate availability of alcohol and other substances. One example being:

Community Alcohol Partnerships

Tackling underage drinking is of vital importance and we have invested in this area by supporting a further two Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAPs) across Wales. These are in Pontypridd and the Cathays area of Cardiff, in addition to those launched in the previous year in Newtown, Pontardawe and Porth. The aim of the CAPs is to tackle underage drinking through co-operation between local stakeholders such as trading standards, police, schools and alcohol retailers. www.communityalcoholpartnerships.co.uk
Population Outcomes

Alcohol consumption

In 2017, 18% of adults (or 1 in 5) reported drinking over the weekly guidelines. Down from 2016 — 20% (source: National Survey for Wales 2018)

Problematic Drug Use

Estimates of problematic use of opioids, cocaine and crack, amphetamine and new psychoactive substances indicate that there are around 49,370 individuals in Wales, aged 15-64 years who are using these types of drugs, including those in contact with health and criminal justice services. Further work is being undertaken to validate these estimates in Wales.

Hospital admissions – alcohol

The number of individuals admitted to hospital for an alcohol specific condition has fallen by 8.8% over the last 5 years.

- The number of hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions involving young people (under 25) has fallen by 25.5% over the last five years to 953 admissions in 2017-18.
- The number of hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions involving working age adults (aged 25-49) has fallen by 14.3% since 2013-14.
- The number of older adults (50 and over) admissions in 2017-18 decreased by 2% on the previous year following three years of relative stability in admissions.

Hospital admissions – drugs

Hospital admissions related to use of illicit drugs decreased by 2.4% compared with 2016-17. Admissions data suggests that use of multiple drugs may be increasing.
Amongst young people (up to 25 years) hospital admission related to opioids have fallen by 6% between 2013-14 and 2017-18.

Over the same period cannabinoid related admissions have increased by 61.4% (all age groups).

Opioids continue to account for considerably more admissions in working aged adults than any other substance, with 2,021 admissions in 2017-18, a decrease of 3.1% from 2016-17.

Hospital admissions involving illicit drugs in older people decreased by 5.5% in 2017-18 compared with the previous year.

Drugs Related Deaths

In 2017, there were 260 drug poisoning deaths (involving both legal and illegal drugs) in Wales. Of these, 185 were drug misuse deaths (involving illegal drugs).

There has been a decrease in deaths involving males and a slight increase in deaths involving females.

Drug Related Death figures for Wales for the most recent 6 years are given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Drug poisoning</th>
<th>Drug misuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>135</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>208</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>168</td>
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<td>168</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alcohol Related Deaths

There were 540 alcohol related deaths in Wales in 2017, an increase of 7.1% on the previous year. Alcohol related deaths have remained relatively stable over the past 5 years. (ONS, 2018)

Impact on Children and Young People

Hospital admissions for foetuses and new-borns affected by maternal use, or withdrawal from, of alcohol or other drugs of addiction have remained very stable over recent years.

There have been 64 admissions for foetuses and new-borns affected by maternal use, or withdrawal from, alcohol or other drugs of addiction in 2017-18, the lowest in the last decade.

In 2017, there were 615 cases of children in need receiving care and support in which the child’s substance misuse was identified as an issue.

There were also 4,035 cases of children in need receiving care and support due to parental substance misuse.
Examples of Good Practice and Innovative Projects

A rural pick and mix needle exchange trial scheme was introduced in Newtown, Powys. It gives individuals the ability to choose the injecting equipment to support their injecting behaviour. Whilst pick and mix schemes are not new in Wales it was fairly unexplored in a rural setting. In addition to this the ability to offer client led choice has led to greater interaction between people using the service and key workers and facilitated opportunities to offer harm reduction advice / information relating to Blood Bourne Virus testing, Naloxone. The trial has not yet finished but initial results demonstrate good take up against traditionally offered services.

The Entry Drug Alcohol Service at Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan carries out triage screening assessments to ensure appropriate onward referrals, alongside implementing direct open access 3 days per week in Cardiff which has had a positive impact on waiting times and has reduced the amount of people failing to attend appointments, effectively engaging individuals when they are ready. A number of courses are delivered, an example of which is:

• Anxiety workshop
  A semi structured 4 week group aimed at raising awareness of anxiety and how to manage it.

What service users say:

“This group has really helped me to understand why I feel the way I do sometimes, I felt better after the first group session and looked forward to the next. It’s nice to meet other people that know how I feel too.”

“I used substances to mask how I was really feeling and now I try harder to manage my thoughts when I feel a panic attack coming...”

“I work in a similar sector and found it difficult to accept that I needed help. I attend Foundations Of Change weekly where it has helped me to highlight that I was letting myself down not others, now I feel in control and in recovery.”

“Being able to talk about things that have happened in my life (via Compass Counselling) and has changed my life. I don’t think I have ever been so happy before.”

“I have been able to talk about my childhood and understand things now, that I have never have had (the chance to do) before, Thank You!”

“Helped me through my problems, person focused and I could speak on the phone when I needed to.”

“I can’t believe how I feel, so much better about my life and I see things so much differently (after receiving support from Barod).”
“I wouldn’t have managed to cope with life without counselling at this time.”

“I found being able to talk about my problems so beneficial and would recommend it to everyone.”

“It (accessing Barod) gave me an opportunity to have someone to talk to when I really needed it and helped me to deal with a very traumatic time without using drugs.”

“Absolutely brilliant (Barod). I see life in a totally different way now.”

Service User Quotes – Extracts from Personal Stories

“I was an opiate user in my early twenties after a traumatic life event. I lost my job, partner, my home and was on a downward spiral. I never thought I could escape! After a lot of persuasion I finally engaged with services and was eventually put a substitute prescribing programme. It gave me space, for the first time I wasn’t dependent on my dealers. I wouldn’t be in pain everyday. Slowly I started to put my life together. Now I’m 15 years drug free have 2 beautiful children, and building my confidence and self esteem with the service user group in Cwm Taf. I’m hoping to gain employment in the field because I love helping people on their recovery journey in the group!”

Female, aged 42 years.

“I moved to Cwm Taf with a drug problem looking for a fresh start. The project worker and counsellor from TEDS have been fantastic and I have now been abstinent for months. I joined the service user group and now I am not so isolated and really enjoying being around positive people. For the first time ever I am looking forward to the future.”

Male, aged 49 years.
Key challenges for the next twelve months

Tackling the harms associated with and caused by substance misuse will remain a top priority for Welsh Government.

We have commenced work with APBs and stakeholders to develop substance misuse priorities going forward from 2019. These will be informed by a range of evidence and needs and respond to the challenges set out in A Healthier Wales.

We will continue to work closely with Area Planning Boards and harm reduction groups within health board areas to ensure that drug and alcohol related deaths are minimised. In doing so, we remain committed to enabling and developing stronger collaboration across the substance misuse, mental health and housing sectors.

The Substance Misuse Delivery Plan (2016-18) will continue in the interim to provide the focus of our work with our partners until April 2019. Our ongoing work with Area Planning Boards, Public Health Wales and other delivery partners will be critical in this respect. We will continue to work with partners on a range of initiatives.

Some of these include:

Working with coroners to ensure drug related deaths in Wales are evaluated in order to disseminate lessons learnt and strengthen governance and information sharing around harm reduction groups and fatal and non-fatal drug poisonings;

Continue to work closely with Area Planning Boards and Harm Reduction Groups in each area and we will continue to develop the Take Home Naloxone Programme to incorporate police custody suites and A&E departments to reach those people currently not engaged in treatment.

We will also continue our work on the Alcohol agenda, supporting those who are most vulnerable and also aiding their recovery.

A key focus here will be on tackling the availability and price of alcohol. Through driving forward the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018, the focus on reducing levels of alcohol consumption amongst harmful and hazardous drinkers (including young people) will progress.

Development of the Recovery agenda continues, and focus will be given to encouraging the use of mutual aid as a key driver in supporting people on their recovery journeys.

Working to continue to ensure that service users are actively involved with Area Planning Boards through meaningful engagement with the support of AWSUM (All Wales Service User Movement).

Continue to tackle the increasing concern of Drug litter by sharing good practice models and collective learning from successful interventions.

Ensuring the recommendations from Health inspectorate Wales (HIW) review, are agreed in partnership with and implemented by a wider range of partners in order to improve the delivery of Substance Misuse services across Wales.