

West Cheshire Together Local Strategic Partnership

General meeting report.

AGENDA ITEM. 7

Report title	Developing an Alcohol Strategy for the Borough
Description	Recommendation report for West Cheshire LSP to comment upon and approve.
Document purpose	To propose an approach to reduce the harm and consequences of alcohol misuse in West Cheshire.
Circulation list	West Cheshire LSP
Decision/Action required	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) a new cross-cutting, multi-agency West Cheshire Alcohol Group comprising experts and commissioners from each thematic area be established;(2) the Thematic Leads identify who these experts and commissioners should be; (N.B. these may not necessarily be drawn from the current membership of the respective thematic partnerships);(3) the West Cheshire Alcohol Group be charged with developing an outcome focused Alcohol Strategy and Action Plan for West Cheshire containing clear and measurable targets; and(4) the West Cheshire Alcohol Group be chaired by Wendy Meredith, Director of Public Health, NHS Western Cheshire. <p>Two additional options for further consideration and decision (see below).</p>
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Target audience	West Cheshire LSP
Cross reference	

DEVELOPING AN ALCOHOL STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH

Introduction

1 The purpose of this report is to outline a suggested approach for the development of an alcohol strategy for West Cheshire prior to agreement by Cheshire West Together – the LSP for West Cheshire – on 30th July 2009.

Background

2 Alcohol is the most commonly used drug in the world. It is a depressant, and can be bought legally in Britain by people over 18. A total of 90% of adults drink alcohol and the majority of those who do drink do so with no problems for most of the time. Alcohol is enjoyed by many people with few, if any, ill effects and moderate drinking, in some cases, can bring some health benefits.

3 However, problem drinking is a feature for a significant minority in our society and creates both health and social problems. Alcohol misuse accounts for almost 9% of disease burden, surpassed only by tobacco and high blood pressure. Alcohol misuse is associated with a wide range of problems including physical health problems such as digestive disorders, accidents, some cancers (causing 5-8% of breast cancers), cardiovascular disease, dementia, and seizures; offending behaviours such as domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, violence and injury; mental health problems such as suicide and deliberate self-harm; and wider social impacts such as homelessness. For the NHS alone, the estimated financial burden of alcohol misuse is around £2.7 billion in hospital admissions. 70% of people nationally think the UK would be a 'healthier and better place to live' if the amount of alcohol consumed were reduced.

4 The importance and relevance of alcohol abuse as a key issue for individuals and communities across West Cheshire has been highlighted and reinforced through a number of surveys and reports published in recent years. These include the 2006 Cheshire Community Survey; the Strategic Assessment produced by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (community safety); and the Western Cheshire Annual Public Health Report 2008. The more recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – the shared statement on the health and social care needs of people living in Cheshire West and Chester – specifically references the prevalence of binge drinking across Cheshire West and Chester as being significantly higher than the national average.

5 The initial self assessment for Comprehensive Area Assessment presented to partners at the LSP meeting held on 30th April reiterated the substantial effect that alcohol abuse has on the resources of a number of publicly funded organisations

and highlighted the need for co-ordinated partnership action to tackle the issue. As a result, the self assessment recommended the development and delivery of a cross-cutting Alcohol Strategy and Action Plan to be driven through the LSP.

Progress to Date

6 Whilst the causes and effects of alcohol abuse have been identified as priorities for action across West Cheshire, it is important that this work dovetails with that of the Cheshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) who are working to co-ordinate a response to the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy – “Safe, Sensible, Social”. As part of this work, a sub-regional stakeholder event was held in Winsford on 30th June 2009 to:

- a) bring together partnership agencies, from East and West Cheshire to agree priority areas; and
- b) consider the structures and processes required to facilitate the development and implementation of alcohol harm reduction.

7 The event confirmed a definite need for a strategic, partnership approach to alcohol harm reduction within Cheshire. The consensus of those present was that separate groups for West and East Cheshire should be established and that the Local Strategic Partnerships should take overall ownership of the alcohol agenda. This obviously reflects the view locally. However, the practical positioning of these groups within the respective LSP frameworks was less clear (i.e. is this a role for the main LSP board, one of the thematic groups such as the health and wellbeing group or for a specific alcohol group formed by representation from the thematic groups) as was the need for a sub-regional or more localised strategies and action plans.

8 In order to progress the development of more specific proposals for West Cheshire, the LSP Director (Alison Armstrong) met with representatives of three of the five thematic partnerships – Safer and Stronger Communities (Paul Daniels), Health and Wellbeing (Wendy Meredith) and Children and Young People (Jane Middleton) - to consider a suggested way forward. The recommendations arising from this discussion are outlined below. If endorsed by the LSP Thematic Leads, these recommendations will be presented to the next meeting of the LSP on 30th July for agreement.

Links to Strategic Commissioning

9 Another key area of work identified by the LSP is the need for a clearly defined and jointly owned approach to how we ‘commission’ for the delivery of shared strategic and local outcomes, particularly those set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

10 Partners will have a varied understanding and experience of commissioning, be this as commissioners or providers of services, though most work in this area to date has been progressed in health and social care. If done effectively commissioning should:

- Enhance local quality of life;

- Better connect service delivery with the needs and aspirations of individuals and communities;
- Make best use of available resources;
- Join up financial and service planning; and
- Anticipate future needs and expectations enabling partners to be proactive rather than reactive.

12 As such, it is important that the partnership agrees a common definition, set of principles and framework to underpin our approach. However, in order to ensure that this is developed and subsequently embedded in a meaningful way across the partnerships framework, it is suggested that the development and delivery of an Alcohol Strategy for West Cheshire be used as a 'test bed' for taking strategic partnership commissioning forward.

Recommendations

That:

- (5) a new cross-cutting, multi-agency West Cheshire Alcohol Group comprising experts and commissioners from each thematic area be established;
- (6) the Thematic Leads identify who these experts and commissioners should be; (N.B. these may not necessarily be drawn from the current membership of the respective thematic partnerships);
- (7) the West Cheshire Alcohol Group be charged with developing an outcome focused Alcohol Strategy and Action Plan for West Cheshire containing clear and measurable targets; and
- (8) the West Cheshire Alcohol Group be chaired by Wendy Meredith, Director of Public Health, NHS Western Cheshire.

In addition, the Thematic Leads are asked to give further consideration to the governance and accountability of this group within the wider partnerships framework and, more specifically, its relationship with both the LSP and the five thematic partnerships.

The two suggested options for consideration are:

- (i) The West Cheshire Alcohol Group exists as a cross-cutting issues-based partnership sitting alongside the five established thematic partnerships, reporting directly into the LSP and directly accountable for the achievement of outcomes and targets.
- (ii) The West Cheshire Alcohol Group exists as a 'task and finish' strategy / action plan development group accountable to the LSP for this task but with the longer term accountability for the achievement of specific outcomes and targets resting with the most relevant thematic partnership.