

Report on	Consultation on Preventing Harm & Empowering Recovery: - A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use
Date of Meeting	12 th January 2021
Reporting Officer	Mark Kelso - Director Public Health & Infrastructure

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
	No	X
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon		

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Members of the draft MUDC response to the Health Development Policy Branch in the Department of Health (DoH) Consultation on Preventing Harm & Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use.
2.0	Background
2.1	This is a consultation on a potential new strategy to replace the previous substance misuse strategy “New Strategy Direction for Alcohol on Drugs, Phase 2” (NSD Phase 2) which has been in place since 2012. The Department of Health published a full review of NSD Phase 2 and launched a pre-consultation for this new strategy in 2019. Following this, stakeholders from the Voluntary and Community sector, Academia, health professionals and Government, along with service users, joined with the Department of Health to help in the co-production of this new consultation document.
2.2	The review and pre-consultation highlighted many issues. They showed that while much progress had been made under the previous strategy, and there were positive signs around the level of substance use particularly among our young people, new challenges have emerged. Polydrug use is increasing the potential for serious harm and putting people at risk of tragic outcomes, the misuse of prescription medicines remains a key issue, and alcohol continues to be our society’s drug of choice – causing more harm to individuals and families than any other substance. It needs to be ensured that legislation, such as alcohol pricing or the classifications of drugs, and the justice system works to support the overall vision – that people in Northern Ireland are supported in the prevention and reduction of harm related to the use and misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and will be empowered to maintain recovery.
2.3	The DoH engagement so far has pointed to many things that can be done better, including the need to better join up services for those suffering multiple needs, such as mental health and substance use. Another issue that came across strongly in the co-production process was the need for a more holistic treatment system, providing patient centred care around the needs of the service users. The need to ensure there is investment in treatment and harm reduction also featured highly,

	<p>along with the need to ensure that there are improvements required in preventing harm developing in the first place, and making sure that support is in place for individuals throughout their recovery journey.</p>
2.4	<p>The most effective tools to tackle this threat must be chosen, which may require some changes in how this problem is thought about. It has been shown that the stigma felt by those suffering harm leads to a fear of coming forward for treatment and support. This must be urgently addressed.</p>
2.5	<p>There is evidence that many people have been experiencing increased stress and isolation this year as a result of COVID-19, and some have increased their alcohol and drug use in response. This past few months has been an extremely difficult period for the Health and Social Care sector and this has put a strain on existing services, which we are working hard to address. Many services had to switch to being provided online and to quickly find new ways to operate. It is now important that this experience is learned from and that innovative ways of working are fine tuned.</p>
2.6	<p>This consultation seeks views on the development of a new strategy to reduce the harm related to substance use in Northern Ireland.</p>
2.7	<p>The strategy falls within the scope of the devolved administration. However as some of the powers are not devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the DoH will continue to work closely with UK Government, the other devolved administrations, and the Government in the Republic of Ireland on these proposals.</p> <p>The consultation period is from Friday 30th October 2020 to Friday 5th February 2021.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>While we welcome the review and draft consultation, we are not convinced that the impact of poverty on substance use is fully appreciated or addressed by the framework. The department's own Health Inequalities Annual Report 2020 states "Alcohol, smoking and drug related indicators continued to show some of the largest health inequalities monitored in NI". There is therefore evidential need to ensure greater services provision and presence in areas of disadvantage. Mid Ulster Council are currently developing an anti-poverty strategy for Mid Ulster and have commenced engagement with Department for Communities (DfC) regarding the development of a regional anti-poverty strategy. Council would request that the framework works closely with DfC regarding the development of a regional Anti-poverty strategy as well as local council areas, developing more localised strategies. Mid Ulster District Council would welcome support from Department of Health (DoH), to assist in the delivery of a Mid Ulster anti-poverty strategy and the tackling of health inequalities such as substance use in our district</p>
3.2	<p>Within the Mid Ulster Community Plan is a commitment to participate in the Planet Youth model when implemented in Northern Ireland. The evaluations of this programme has demonstrated that cigarette smoking, drinking and cannabis use in</p>

	<p>this age group plummeted. Also, protective factors increased and risk factors decreased. Mid Ulster are aware that the PHA and the Department of Justice were developing a pilot, however it has been some time since we last heard of its progress. MUDC would urge the relevant departments to peruse this pilot and offer the Council's support and assistance in its developments.</p> <p>Outcome D – people access high quality treatment and support services to reduce harm and empower recover</p>
3.3	<p>Mid Ulster would advocate for treatment and support services to be delivered through local centres based in main towns with satellite outreach in minor towns within each district. In Mid Ulster, this would see centres in Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt with satellite outreach in Coalisland and Maghera, areas which have substantial deprivation levels. This model would not only address deprivation issues with regard to access to services experienced in our rural district, but also would provide for local knowledge to target interventions and react to local events, providing early intervention based on community surveillance.</p>
3.4	<p>Mid Ulster have continuously voiced their dissatisfaction that addiction service contracts are not awarded by council geographies, but rather Health & Social Care Trust geographies. This has led to a disjointed provision of services in the district, with different services and programmes being delivered across the district. Council would seek that this is addressed by the proposed strategic framework.</p> <p>Making it happen – governance and structures</p>
3.5	<p>Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the joined up approach to this cross departmental action plan. Through it facilitation and involvement in delivering community Planning in the district, the Council is fully aware of the benefit of cross partner working. However, Mid Ulster District Council would point out, that to strengthen the delivery of this action plan and see greater benefit from a whole system joined up approach, it should take cognisance of what is happening through the 11 Community Plans working at local district levels, many of whom are delivering actions for vulnerable children and young people.</p>
3.6	<p>Members are asked to give consideration to the Draft Consultation response as outlined at Appendix 2.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/a
	Human: N/a
	Risk Management: N/a

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Members consider the content of the attached draft response to this consultation and if in agreement, responds to the DoH by Friday 5 th February.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Health Development Policy Branch in the Department of Health (DoH) Consultation on Preventing Harm & Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use.
6.2	Appendix 2 – MUDC draft response to consultation.