



Derby City Council

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD
24 March 2016

Report of the Cabinet Member for Cohesion
and Integration

Appendix 2
ITEM XX

A

New Psychoactive Substances Partnership Strategy 2015 - 2018

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The UK has experienced a rise in the use of new or Novel Psychoactive substances – NPS. Some of these - most famously Mephedrone (known as MCAT) – have been banned under changes to the Misuse of Drugs act 1971 making them now illegal. The temporary banning of others based on emerging harms has taken place over the last 4 years, but largely they remain legal and are thus commonly referred to as Legal Highs. The Government plans to pass new laws in 2016 banning all ‘legal highs’, but as we have seen with drugs that have been illegal for years, this will only go so far in reducing the harms caused to individuals and society.
- 1.2 Regionally prisons are reporting significant issues with NPS use in their settings - with associated increases in physical and mental health problems as a direct result. Across Derbyshire County there have been a number of deaths where NPS involvement is suspected to have been a contributory factor. Legal highs are locally resulting in on-street antisocial behaviour; crime; and academic underachievement when used by school aged children. This is compounded by any health issues that arise from recreational and problematic use.
- 1.3 Derby city has therefore taken the step of developing a multiagency partnership strategy aimed at tackling the problem of NPS at every level – from education and prevention to regulation and enforcement. A comprehensive action plan underpins this strategic approach and the intention is to have a media launch prior to Xmas.
- 1.4 With NPS potentially becoming a high profile issue – especially with the pending launch of the New Psychoactive Substances bill in 2016 – it would be judicious to have a political lead spearheading the launch of our strategy and further garnering support amongst key stakeholders. Key agencies already involved include: The Police; Royal Derby Hospital; DCC ASB team; Public Health and Substance misuse treatment providers; The safeguarding board; Local schools and head teachers; trading standards; and local housing providers.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 For Councillor Afzal to champion the City’s NPS strategy and lead a pre-Christmas media campaign outlining the aims of the strategy and the dangers of Legal Highs

- 2.2 For the already established NPS partnership strategy group to report to Councillor Afzal as necessary on the progress of strategy implication and the outcomes of the approach

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The potential harms caused by NPS are significant. In Derby city considerable independent actions have already been taken to address the growing problem of NPS. The police and public health have autonomous action plans aimed at tackling different aspects of the legal high problem. It is now time to combine these approaches into a coherent, multi-strand, cost neutral strategy
- 3.2 Derby City needs to be seen to be tackling the problem of NPS use – and the associated costs to the wider economy. By securing a lead councillor and using the media at judicious times we can raise awareness of the issues, carry out evidence based harm reduction approaches and secure sustainable partnership support for this growing menace.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Please see appendix 2 – for full strategy, background and associated action plan
- 4.2 Both adult and young person's substance misuse treatment services are reporting an increase in the number of individuals seeking help and support following 'legal high' use. This is similarly reflected in hospital admissions where a growing number are attending with physical and emotional harm. Anecdotal information from health agencies, schools the police and other community services supports growing concerns around the availability, consumption and a lack of credible information relating to NPS. Young people in particular – especially those deemed vulnerable – are at an increasing risk of experiencing poor academic achievement, social exclusion and offending behaviour in addition to physical and emotional damage. It is our duty to safeguard all people engaged in the use of legal or illegal substances.

Availability of NPS in Derby city is currently no different to any city across the UK. Legal highs can be bought by over 18s in some shops and very easily over the internet. Fortunately we do not have 'on street drug selling of NPS' and therefore the perception by the public is somewhat different to illegal drugs and their link to crime. Any strategy aimed at addressing the harms cause by NPS use needs to be flexible and responsive – especially in light of the imminent Psychoactive substances Bill 2016 which will criminalise offences such as importation, distribution and supply of so called 'legal highs'.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Do nothing. This is not considered an option due to the increasing levels of evidence of harm.
- 5.2 Seek the high level or Chief officer support of an alternative partnership agency – for example the Police and Crime Commissioner

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Dr Robyn Dewis, Acting Director of Public Health
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Dr Richard Martin 07970359356 Richard.martin@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2- Strategy

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The strategy is cost neutral as it relates to the coordination of activities already being undertaken. Social Return on investment for substance misuse treatment and prevention demonstrates that for every £1 spent on treatment £7 is liberated in the wider economy

Legal

- 2.1 New Psychoactive Substances Bill due to become law in April 2016. The strategy attempts to mitigate against the limited enforcement powers available until that date.

Personnel

- 3.1 DCC Public Health staff already commission and co-ordinate substance misuse treatment and prevention activity. Therefore no meaningful personnel implications

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- 4.1 None

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 See Substance misuse EIRA and Risk register. Substance misuse issues tend to affect the most disadvantaged in society and this strategy is designed to mitigate against the effect on these groups.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 No issue for DCC

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 N/A

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 N/A

Risk Management

- 9.1 See Public Health Risk Register. Although the work described is already being undertaken, the strategy allows partners to increase the visibility of this and mitigate against reputational risk.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 Meeting the objectives set out in DCC corporate plan; People Directorate business plan and the Big Conversation public consultation