**A Recovery & Wellbeing Village – The Time is Now….**

Much although not all of what you are about to read can be found within the Scottish Government’s Drug Strategy, Rights, Respect and Recovery, published in 2018.

It is good to see there is a strong commitment from the Scottish Government to unlock investment to deliver against their National Mission to Save and Improve Lives – 8 lives being lost every day to drugs, alcohol, and suicide in Scotland.

It has been reported that fewer young people are using alcohol and drugs although our older and less healthy users need urgent help, across a range of interrelated challenges in their lives. It has been established that quick access to treatment is crucial, and it’s very important that there is a range of services for different people with different needs, as person-centred support is vital. It has been established that adopting a public health approach is the way forward.

There may initially be controversial or unpopular remedies such as supervised drug consumption, which going forward should be evidence-based. It has been suggested all involved should acknowledge a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The “Rights, Respect and Recovery” bill report states the Scottish Government are committed to continuing to fund prevention, treatment, and recovery.

It is accepted that those harmed by alcohol and drugs is one of the hardest and most complex challenges we face as a country. All individuals should be supported on their own unique recovery journey. There are many who believe an asset-based approach to working together to plan, invest and deliver in partnership, is the only sustainable solution, as the public sector cannot be expected to achieve this critical Mission alone.

The Scottish Drug Forums (SDF) are considering how services and culture can support or hinder harm reduction. This is critically important, as is the Scottish Recovery Consortium’s (SRC) role in supporting and championing Recovery Communities across Scotland and amplifying the voice of lived experience in designing needs-led solutions.

All In The Family! A partnership between [Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs](https://www.sfad.org.uk/) and My Support Day based within South Lanarkshire [Beacons](https://thebeacons.org.uk/)**,** has developed awhole family approach to support anyone affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use. The term family is used inclusively, meaning the team support the individual's perspective of who is their family. This can include friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Families Anonymous (FA) are supporting families living with the harms associated with drugs and alcohol. We believe this must be a national response at the heart of any sustainable solution, as addiction impacts whole families and communities.

It is estimated that between 35,000 and 51,000 children in Scotland are affected by alcohol, drugs or both; 61,500 individuals aged between 15 and 64 are engaged in problematic use of opiates and or benzodiazepines; and around 4% of the adult population have alcohol dependency. Tragically, public data shows that alcohol, drugs, and suicide deaths totaled 3,117 in Scotland in 2019, whilst in 2017, there were 8,546 drug stays in hospital and 36,235 alcohol stays in hospital, 93% being very costly emergency admissions. The need for radical change is clear given the human, social, and economic costs being incurred every day.

There is a clear trend of our aging population of users for whom drug use has become considerably more harmful over time. The drug market is ever changing and shows a rapid growth of new psychoactive substances as well as new routes to market through the internet, dark web, and social media. There is also an increase in the prevalence and potency of many drugs including cannabis, cocaine, benzodiazepines, which is a particular concern for the most vulnerable in the population of people who use drugs.

There has been a rapid growth of Recovery Communities which have grown up alongside existing peer-led mutual aid groups, which is helping to improve the overall understanding of addiction, recovery and the impact of stigma and discrimination. We believe there is nothing more important than those voices with lived and living experience, and they must be at the heart of designing and delivering solutions. They can walk the talk and can come together to demonstrate the power of Changed People Changing People.

Prevention and early intervention without doubt will lessen the harm caused by alcohol and drugs. We believe education on the danger of alcohol and drug misuse should be adopted as part of the curriculum in all schools across Scotland. People with lived and living experience are probably best suited to deliver the reality of when alcohol and drug use goes wrong. The more we can do on prevention and early intervention, the less harm will be caused by alcohol and drugs.

Effective prevention aims to reduce the circumstances and situations which place children, young people, and adults at greater risk of developing problem drug use and its associated harms. Clear links between adverse childhood experiences and problematical alcohol and drug use are regularly noted. It’s also worth reporting that around 70% of 15-year-olds have received lessons in class on drugs. There are plans to continue to take forward substance use education in Scottish schools.

Scotland’s alcohol consumption has always been higher than much of the UK and Western Europe. We must work hard together to change this. Some recovery in Scotland has become more visible in recent times, particularly abstinence-based recovery. Treatment services absolutely must be publicised and made accessible. Alongside treatment services other health and social services also play a critical role. This includes housing, employability, primary healthcare, mental health, and children and family services, among others.

It’s clearly noted that relapse is not uncommon amongst people in treatment as well as those who have moved on from treatment. We believe this is a crucial time when support should be extended after rehab finishes, to make planned and integrated aftercare a reality for everyone.

The links between problematic alcohol and drug use and poor mental health are well documented and can lead to individuals facing barriers to treatment for both issues, being caught in the middle of a system that is trying to fix them issue by issue. Improvements are being made in this regard, but much more work is required. Again, the public sector cannot be expected to develop solutions in isolation – asset-based partnership working is vital.

Settled housing plays an important role in the prevention of and recovery from problematic alcohol and drug use. But a house must be a settled home, and there must be sufficient support in place to allow people to build positive connections locally and positive relationships with people who will walk with them on their recovery journey. There must be recognition of the cross-over between communities of place and communities of shared experience.

Scotland has thriving Recovery Communities, these groups, together with the recovery activists within them, are best placed to lead on the development of recovery capital and reducing stigma within communities, as well as making a positive impact more broadly in their local community – recovery assets are community assets. Recovery communities provide safe places for people to socialise, connect with others in recovery, and maintain their personal recovery journeys. The recovery cafes and groups all have a part to play at normalising recovery and provide a safe space for anyone within the community that would like to access them.

Any approach must be trauma-informed, as the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adult trauma, must be recognised and considered in all aspects of service design and delivery. This is vital as part of promoting a Recovery Orientated System of Care (ROSC) across Scotland.

While men are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, the recent disproportionate rise in drug related deaths among women is a particular concern. It should be noted that younger people are now less likely to be presenting for treatment for heroin and more likely to be using new psychoactive substances.

Problem alcohol and drug use amongst family members can have a devastating impact on the lives of children. Alcohol and drug use by a loved one can also cause trauma and distress for their children and families. Wherever possible, we want children and young people to remain in stable loving families. For this to happen, services must work together to support families and share concerns quickly and effectively to protect children and young people from harm, whilst recognising that children living with a parent or guardian with alcohol or drug use are not always at risk or harm – person-centred approaches are required as every case is different.

The role of Police Scotland has changed within this changing social landscape. Over 80% of their calls for service are vulnerability related in many parts of Scotland. They are developing a trauma-informed approach to policing that is welcomed as people must be diverted away from the justice system. Officers work closely with Recovery Communities and national organisations to explore ways to better deal with drug related deaths and to promote a ROSC culture. More people must be given access into treatment and support, including those who enter via the justice system. In a system where punishment is easier than rehabilitation, custodial sentences can ultimately place people with alcohol and drug problems in greater risk or harm.

We know that compared to average rates in society, there are higher rates of problem alcohol and drug use amongst the prison population. A survey in 2018 finding that 78% of people who are in prison tested positive for illicit substances, with 28% testing positive for illicit opiates. Support must be offered in this sector.

The information you have just read comes from various sources and at the Blameless children’s charity. We are thankful for everyone’s massive contributions to the information contained.

Our own research over recent years indicates that new approaches are required. We are working in partnership to design and deliver a Recovery and Wellbeing Village in Hamilton, to develop a whole system where people can recover and thrive. It is being structured as a public, social, private partnership to harness all available assets to allow us to achieve the step change in outcomes we all know are possible. Our Village will be part of a wider Connected Community so that gaps are closed, and dots are joined across as many partner organisations as possible.

We are excited by this approach as it’s a first of type in the UK and will provide a Blueprint to be repeated across Scotland and beyond. It will involve new ways of thinking, new partnerships, and new solution designs, but our engagement has been very positive, and support locally and nationally is strong. It is recognised that more of the same is not an option and that polishing around the edges of existing service models will not deliver the outcomes so badly needed.

So, I would like to guide people to the Blameless website to download the Recovery and Wellbeing Village Solution Outline that’s being designed and planned by Hamilton Academical Stadium, Blue Triangle, and the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC). This can also be accessed via [**Recovery and Wellbeing Village Solution Outline**](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/-HydCAmPgUZq3oHGUufx?domain=btha.org.uk).

When this is viewed together with our preventative spend analysis a compelling case for our innovative approach, working with football clubs as the Cathedrals of the People becomes clear. Let’s think differently and get this done – the time is now.