

The Recovery Partnership – An update

(August 2011)

The Substance Misuse Skills Consortium, the Recovery Group UK and DrugScope formed the Recovery Partnership in May 2011 to provide a new collective voice for the drug sector to Ministers and Government. A 'Statement of Intent' was produced (and revised in July) setting out the aim and purpose of the Partnership (see below). Building on the important work of sector membership and umbrella organisations and other groups, the Partnership is able to draw on a broad range of organisations, interest groups and service user groups and voices.

Since May the Recovery Partnership has undertaken (and plans) the following activities:

Housing and Recovery

A paper on Housing and Recovery was produced at the request of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Drugs (IMG), chaired by Baroness Browning, Minister for Crime Prevention and Anti-Social Behaviour. The paper was discussed at the July meeting of the IMG.

A draft of the paper was widely circulated for comment and feedback, including to members of the Skills Consortium, Recovery Group UK, the DrugScope Treatment Provider Chief Executives' Forum and the Concordat. To further inform the paper, an online survey was produced and disseminated (including being featured on DS Daily) – nearly 100 survey responses were received.

The final paper discussed by Ministers at the IMG is available here:

<http://www.drugscope.org.uk/Resources/Drugscope/Documents/PDF/Policy/RecoveryPartnershipIMGHousingPaper.pdf>

A briefing on housing and recovery, drawing extensively on the feedback to the draft paper and the online survey, will be published in September (and will be available as a 'pull-out in Druglink magazine).

Following the July IMG meeting, the Partnership held its first meetings with senior officials at the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). In addition to the Partnership paper, other issues discussed included: local reductions in Supporting People funding; Supporting People payment by results pilots; the impact of localism and the changing relationship between Government and local authorities.

The Partnership will be discussing with the National Housing Federation how we can support its work, particularly with housing associations.

Residential rehabilitation

The Recovery Partnership has been asked by the IMG to produce a paper on the issues and challenges for residential rehabilitation. It is planned that this paper will be discussed at an IMG meeting. The Partnership has already met with officials from the Department of Health, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Justice and the National Treatment Agency to discuss the funding, availability and provision of residential rehabilitation services. The Partnership has begun consulting key stakeholders, including the Concordat, and has begun to disseminate a questionnaire for tier 3 and 4 service providers.

The Work Programme and Welfare Reform

The Partnership has met with senior officials at the Department for Work and Pensions to discuss the Work Programme and support for people with drug and alcohol problems. Issues raised include the engagement of Prime Providers with drug and alcohol services; the role of local and regional Job Centre Plus in supporting people with drug and alcohol problems, and the impact of social security benefit changes (including housing benefit, direct payments and the social fund). The Partnership will be producing a paper for the IMG to highlight issues and concerns.

Payment by Results

The Partnership has met with Government officials to discuss payment by results (PbR) for drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services and specifically the proposed outcome measures (domains) for the PbR pilots. A paper on PbR will be produced for the September meeting of the IMG.

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

On 1st September, the Recovery Partnership will be meeting with members of the new Recovery Committee being set by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD). The ACMD is keen to explore how the Partnership can inform its work, including key issues, suggestions for co-optees to the Committee and evidence gathering.

Other issues the Partnership has raised and discussed with officials include: i) funding for young people's treatment, education and prevention services and particularly evidence of cuts in local services; ii) Public Health England and the transfer of responsibility for drug and alcohol treatment to local authorities and Health and Wellbeing Boards. The Partnership has highlighted concerns in the sector about the risk of disinvestment, particularly if (as proposed) the current 'ring fence' for drug treatment is removed.

The Partnership would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have taken the time to provide information, comments and feedback on these and other issues. As outlined in the 'Statement of Intent', the Partnership is committed to consulting as widely as possible on the issues, opportunities and challenges in achieving the ambitions for recovery.

Recovery Partnership - Statement of Intent

The Government's Drug Strategy sets out a welcome new ambition for improving outcomes and supporting recovery that we all share.

The Recovery Partnership is comprised of the Substance Misuse Skills Consortium, the Recovery Group UK and DrugScope. It seeks to be a new collective voice and channel for communication to Ministers/Government on the achievement of the ambitions in the drug strategy.

However, whilst building on existing initiatives and the important work of sector membership, umbrella organisations and other stakeholders, we believe that more needs to be done to support, champion and drive forward a truly recovery oriented system. Consequently, in shaping the work of the Recovery Partnership it is vital to remember that

its creation is based on a powerful desire to unite the field in achieving a sea change in the treatment system, focusing efforts on creating genuine opportunities for problem drug and alcohol users to recover from dependency and make a positive contribution to society.

The scale of the transformation from a system that has concentrated on engaging and retaining people in treatment to one that is capable of delivering recovery outcomes should not be underestimated. Arguably the greatest challenge is addressing the attitudes and practice of all parties in the treatment system and in creating a culture that genuinely embraces change.

The Recovery Partnership is currently establishing itself within the sector and will focus initially on contributing its voice to priority issues of relevance to both the sector and Government. In addition to this 'Statement of Intent' we will develop a key summary of recovery values, terms of reference, a 'partnership protocol' and agree criteria for impact, 'added value' and effectiveness.

The strength of the Partnership is that each member has a broad and established constituency and can collectively represent the voices of organisations, services, professions and interests in the sector, and also engage with many in related sectors (such as housing, training, criminal justice and health).

Each of the Partners will draw on the experiences and views of its respective memberships, constituencies, and networks, supported by specific consultations and evidence gathering to ensure the robustness of our views on the issues and concerns, and of any recommendations the Partnership makes to Government and others (for example as in the 'Housing & Recovery' paper considered by the IMG at their July 2011 meeting).

We will identify any gaps in our respective memberships and constituencies to ensure maximum engagement and participation in informing the evidence gathering, 'voice' and communication to Government. In addition, relevant organisations, groups and individuals will be offered the opportunity to meet with the Partnership and/or make representations on particular issues or concerns as necessary.

The Partnership has offered to work with the new recovery committee of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to share learning, information and evidence on supporting and driving forward recovery.

The Partnership may independently advise, inform and comment as needed on what can be described as implementation matters - such as improving commissioning practice, ensuring service user choice, effective local partnership working and so on, but will not seek to act as a quality assurance, regulatory or accountability body. These will be the responsibilities of - for example - Public Health England, NICE and other statutory, regulatory or delivery/support bodies (including the Skills Consortium and sector membership/umbrella organisations).

We have considered the case for establishing an entirely new group or organisation to provide support for recovery and a voice to Government. Our clear view is that the energy, commitment and engagement of the sector will be best achieved and maximised by building on existing strengths, expertise and constituencies. We welcome the challenge and the opportunity.

William Butler, Chair of the Substance Misuse Skills Consortium

Noreen Oliver MBE, Chair of the Recovery Group UK

Martin Barnes, Chief Executive, Drugscope

