

Section A: Building a new drug strategy

1a. Are these the right aims for the new drugs strategy?

1b. Which are the most important and why?

DrugScope believes that while these statements may cover the appropriate areas of concern, they are not the right aims for the strategy. The second statement should not be an aim of the strategy but if expressed in less emotive language may be an appropriate operational objective.

Additionally our stakeholders have told us that they believe that framing the strategy in “negative” terms (e.g., ‘reducing the harms caused...’) is not constructive – and makes it much harder to get people on board locally.

DrugScope suggests the following overall aim for any new national strategy:

“To increase the well being of people directly and indirectly experiencing problems with substance use, ensuring the broadest range of opportunities and assistance is available for those communities experiencing the highest levels of problematic substance use.”

The use of this positive aim would mean measuring real outcomes for individuals and communities using a range of indicators including health, crime, educational attainment, employment, economic wellbeing. This aim also enables the targeting of resources at those areas experiencing the greatest problems. The focus of this aim is on substance use not just illicit drug use. **DrugScope** believes that the objectives of the national alcohol strategy sit easily under this aim and given the overwhelming evidence that alcohol use causes at least as

much damage to our communities and to individuals as illicit drugs we have no hesitation in calling for a UK Substance Use Strategy to tackle both alcohol and drugs. **DrugScope** welcomes the emphasis by government to tackle both drug and alcohol related harms implicit within the new PSA. However the disparity in delivery systems and resources for drugs and alcohol may negate the impact of this.

In terms of young people's substance use, **DrugScope** believes the natural home for a substance use strategy lies within the Every Child Matters agenda. Accordingly we would expect substance use (including alcohol, tobacco and solvents) to be an explicit cross cutting aim of overall strategy for young people as delivered by Children's Trusts. Drug and alcohol use has a clear impact on the opportunity for every child to reach the five outcomes¹ and all partnerships need to be challenged to develop integrated responses.

DrugScope does not believe any one of the statements is any more important than any of the others. However, amongst those concerned with implementing this strategy in England and Wales there is a concern that drug users and their families are often isolated from the wider community and are unable in many cases to take advantage of the mainstream opportunities to better their own lives – such as housing, employment, education and training – that we know make a real difference to both recovery and prevention. **DrugScope** hopes therefore that the Government will reprioritise work within communities – such as that achieved through many Communities Against Drug Projects in the early years of the current strategy – to provide additional resources to increase resilience and opportunity for families and individuals affected by drug use. Additionally **DrugScope** hopes that the absence of a specific health focussed aim does not imply a continued over emphasis on crime prevention, which we believe has led to a strategic imbalance in the current strategy.

¹ The outcomes are: Be healthy; Stay safe; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; Achieve economic well-being