

Nottinghamshire County Substance Misuse Consultation

Executive Summary

December 2013

This report is a summary of the key themes identified through the consultation undertaken during 20th June – 20th September 2013 in respect of the proposed changes to substance misuse treatment and recovery services in Nottinghamshire County. A full report is available.

The aim of the consultation was to consult with a wide a range of stakeholders and the public from across the county as possible in order to; fully understand views and opinions about the current treatment system, the concept of recovery and a proposed model of delivery for a new recovery-orientated substance misuse system.

A number of methods were used during the process. All the information and comments received were analysed by a team within the Public Health Directorate.

The key themes identified were:

THEME 1: Those affected by another's substance misuse

- Families and loved ones are potentially a route into (and back into) treatment and recovery for a substance misuser, as well as support whilst the substance misuser is in treatment. Investing in support services for those affected by another's substance misuse reduces the burden on other health and social care services.
- A strong feeling was expressed that support for those affected by another's substance misuse should have been included within the project scope. It was felt strongly that this group (including grandparents who look after their grandchildren due to the parent's substance misuse) need support in their own right regardless of whether the substance misuser is in treatment or not.

THEME 2: Treatment and Recovery

- It was felt that the current system could do more in terms of an aspiration of recovery for service users. Mixed views were expressed regarding the models aspiration of abstinence, with some very clear advocates of an abstinence based approach whilst others were concerned that this is too prescriptive and 'one size doesn't fit all'.

- The positive roles of mutual aid groups and peer-led opportunities were raised and the importance of ensuring that they are 'visible' at all stages of the service users journey.
- The integration of the drug and alcohol pathways was welcomed (also recognising poly-drug and other drug use), as was the inclusion of other system functions (i.e. residential rehabilitation services, supported accommodation services and GP and Pharmacy services).
- Supported access to stable and suitable housing and sustained tenancies, employment and education were considered very important.

"...we need time limited goals, not just hanging around in treatment"

THEME 3: Access to services

- Locally based services which are easily accessible and sensitive to local need was a very strong message, particularly from Bassetlaw representatives.
- Short or no waiting times was viewed as very important, along with out of hours/weekend and outreach service provision, with people generally wanting more provision than is currently provided.
- It was raised that the boundary/cross border issues may become significant unless arrangements are put in place between neighbouring Councils, especially in relation to registered GP practice populations

THEME 4: Concerns

- It was felt by some that there was a lack of clarity about the decision-making process so far and the factors underpinning this. Local organisations were concerned that not all district councils are represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board or the Public Health Committee.
- There was a real fear that local services will be disrupted or cease to exist at all and the effect this will have on service users. This was most acutely felt in Bassetlaw.
- Comments were made on the consultation document itself and the language used within it. Some felt that they didn't know enough about how the system worked currently to make an informed decision on the proposed changes.

BASSETLAW

In parallel with the NCC consultation process, John Mann MP for Bassetlaw undertook his own consultation, calling for the existing GP led service within Bassetlaw to remain unchanged.

A thematic analysis of all the responses, petition papers and testimonies identified the following themes:

Theme 1: The service should remain unchanged

- The current GP led substance misuse service in Bassetlaw received resounding support. There was a call to leave it “unchanged” and that it was “under attack”, although there was some who stated that improvements could be made. There was an assumption that a replacement service would be worse than the current one and there was a fear of what this change would represent.
- It was stated that “Bassetlaw is different” to any of the other districts in the county and that this uniqueness warranted a local service. Bassetlaw was perceived as having a much better service provision than ten years ago and that this was a service that was functioning well.

Theme 2: Fear

- It was felt that a change in service provision would represent a negative or even dangerous threat. It was feared that any change would bring with it a diminished standard in the quality of care. . The fear of a rise in crime was evident in some responses.
- It was viewed that if the service moved away from the local GPs, people would stop using the service. The presumption was made that the new model would equate to less conveniently based geographical services – one service operating from one area in the county.
- The reference to privatisation and the perceived detrimental nature of this was made in a number of responses. The use of the word ‘privatisation’ and reference to this approach can be seen in the documentation presented by John Mann MP but is not reflected in the NCC consultation documents.

Theme 3: Holistic approach

- The importance of a service delivering a holistic approach in one place was seen as important, particularly by service users.

Theme 4: Lack of adequate consultation

- Some respondents believed that the consultation process had been inadequate and that the information being provided by the County Council left them with unanswered questions. It was suggested that the consultation and the proposed model were merely a ‘quick fix’ approach.

Next steps

The consultation responses have been reviewed by the Expert Panel, and changes have been made to the model proposed. Work is currently underway to ensure that the development of service specification reflects the results of the consultation.