

BRIEFING PAPER

SET-UP OF WESTERN BAY INDEPENDENT EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL / DRUGS COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

At the joint meeting of the two Public Services Boards on the 16/10/2020 a paper was submitted and approved for establishing an 'Integrated Public Health Model for Substance Misuse in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot' as the key driver for transforming substance use services.

One of the five key recommendations for action from this paper (pg. 5) was:

'Establish an expert advisory panel to support the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and act as a critical friend to Western Bay APB and any other pilot APB areas. Part of the work of this panel, along with the APB and partners, will involve engaging with the specialist workforce at the earliest possible opportunity, and throughout the process. The specialist workforce is scarce, hard to recruit and difficult to retain and successful implementation will hinge on the ability to staff the service with the necessary support.'

Western Bay APB formally agreed to explore this approach and agreed to act as the principle governing body for the programme.

In exploring options for establishing an expert advisory panel, Michael Cuties (Head of Substance Misuse, Welsh Government) introduced the previous Chair and Vice Chair of Western Bay APB (Karen Jones and CS Jo Maal) to Andy Perkins (Director of Figure 8 Consultancy), who has been responsible for setting up and facilitating the work of the independent Dundee Drugs Commission ([Dundee Drugs Commission](#) | [Dundee City Council](#)).

Dundee currently experiences the highest rates of drug deaths in the UK and the Commission has been instrumental over the last four years in helping to understand the unique challenges faced in Dundee and identifying appropriate responses to the public health emergency faced. As a result, substantial changes have, and continue to be, made in realigning service provision to ensure that substance use treatment is a protective factor for those experiencing the harms caused by substance use (and their families). For the first time in many years, Dundee saw a reduction in the

annual number of drug related deaths during 2020. 57 deaths were recorded during 2020, compared to 72 in 2019 and 66 in 2018. As a result of the Dundee Commission's work, Dundee has attracted significant new investment from Scottish Government to help implement the recommendations of the Commission's 2019 report ('Responding to Drug Use with Kindness, Compassion and Hope'). This includes a £0.45m investment in a two-year 'Whole System of Care' Test of Change project focused on the full integration of substance use and mental health services in Dundee (a key recommendation of the Commission).

AIM OF THIS BRIEFING PAPER

To set out plans for the set-up and facilitation of an independent Expert Advisory Panel [EAP] / Drugs Commission on behalf of Western Bay APB.

OBJECTIVES OF FACILITATION SUPPORT

- To establish an independent EAP / Drugs Commission for Western Bay that can identify and investigate the key causes and consequences of drug use and drug deaths for individuals and their families; and subsequently recommend robust and realistic policy and practical measures to address these.
- To use, and adapt where necessary, the independent Dundee Drugs Commission Model, incorporating its strengths and good practice, including:
 - research (i.e. identify and investigate the key causes and consequences of drug use and drug deaths for individuals and their families; consider evidence of what has worked elsewhere to combat problematic drug use and drug deaths);
 - community engagement (i.e. seek the views and involvement of all relevant 'community' stakeholders);
 - user perspective (i.e. seek the views and involvement of individuals and families with lived experience);
 - a partnership approach (i.e. assess the effectiveness of the strategic planning and delivery of services co-ordinated by the Western Bay APB and more broadly across community planning partners as relevant); and
 - a focus on practical recommendations for action (i.e. prepare a report for the Western Bay APB and its partners, with recommendations on additional priorities for practical and achievable action to tackle and reduce drug use and drug deaths across the area).

RESOURCING

Western Bay APB have agreed that support and facilitation expertise is required from independent consultants to work alongside APB representatives and Partners to establish and deliver the independent EAP / Drugs Commission, as well as help with disseminating the findings and recommendations.

Beyond this consultancy support, minimal resources are required to run the EAP / Commission. As the Commission will be independent in nature, all members will be recruited on the basis that they offer their time and expertise free of charge. If face-to-face meetings are possible at any point during the running of the EAP/Commission (Covid restrictions permitting), then three lines of expenditure may be required:

1. Travel/subsistence expenses for EAP/Commission members.¹
2. Room hire/catering expenses for EAP/Commission meetings.
3. Costs associated with hosting an official launch and a final conference.

Any such costs incurred will be met in full by the Western Bay APB.

Welsh Government have signed off Western Bay APBs proposal for investing in this external support and facilitation expertise. They have acknowledged that this investment will benefit the whole of Wales in terms of the learning that will arise, and that Western Bay will be at the forefront of developing an informed Welsh approach to reducing the harms caused by substance use, and ultimately in reducing the numbers of drug-related deaths across the country.

FACILITATION SUPPORT

Figure 8 Consultancy has been commissioned by the Western Bay APB to provide the necessary facilitation support for the EAP/Commission. The decision to appoint Figure 8 was based not only on their experience of designing and delivering the facilitation support for the independent Dundee Drugs Commission, but also because of their track record (in the last five years) of delivering six national contracts for Welsh Government (including the review of the national drug and alcohol strategy) and five substance use research and evaluation contracts across three other APB areas. Figure 8 has also sub-contracted Dr Wulf Livingston (Glyndwr University) to help lead the facilitation support. Wulf works regularly with Figure 8 and his involvement will ensure that all decisions are grounded in the current Welsh policy and strategy landscape.

¹ Only one (out of 20) of the Dundee Drugs Commission members claimed travel expenses.

Figure 8 will:

- provide consideration of the structure needed to understand and deliver the required changes, i.e. considerations of: name (EAP, commission, etc.), independence, membership (including critical roles of Chair and lived experience), public-facing nature of the EAP/Commission, EAP/Commission structures, reporting ownership, clinical governance framework, input into national agendas;
- recruit (by utilising their own networks of contacts and those of the Western Bay APB) and support EAP/Commission members;
- organise an EAP/Commission launch event;
- programme, arrange and plan all EAP/Commission meetings;
- produce briefing papers, minutes, and reports for all EAP/Commission meetings;
- provide advice and support to the EAP/Commission Chair/Vice-Chair, and in particular to lived experience members;
- identify and arrange speakers and evidence providers for EAP/Commission meetings;
- capture and represent evidence from those with lived experience;
- capture and represent evidence from those working within services;
- capture and make linkages with other strategic boards who provide services to the same client group, e.g. Housing and Homelessness, Mental Health, Domestic Abuse;
- prepare mid-term and final reports;
- organise a final conference to share and disseminate key findings and recommendations of the EAP/Commission; and
- liaise with the press and media (through support from, and collaboration with, Local Authority, Health Board and/or PCC Communication Teams).

CHAIR/VICE-CHAIR RECRUITMENT

Through discussion with Western Bay APB and Local Authorities / Health Board / PCC Leaders, Figure 8 will, in the first instance, identify and approach potential candidates for the role of Chair and Vice-Chair of the EAP/Commission.² This will be a critical first step in the planning and set-up phase of the EAP/Commission, as the individuals appointed will help shape the recruitment of other Commission members, as well as the work plan for the EAP/Commission. The Chair and Vice-

² The potential for two Co-Chairs will also be considered as an alternative to a Chair/Vice-Chair Model.

Chair will be appointed by the Western Bay APB on the basis that they bring an independent voice and expertise to the role in order to lead and direct the formal EAP/Commission process, rather than being appointed from an organisational perspective.

EAP/COMMISSION MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Once identified and appointed by the Western Bay APB, the Chair/Vice-Chair will work with Figure 8 to identify, approach and recruit a mix of suitable Commission members covering (but not limited to) the following areas of expertise:

- Public Health
- APB/Commissioning (External)
- Addictions and Social Psychiatry
- Pharmacy
- Social Work
- Police
- HMPPS
- Third Sector
- Academia
- Elected Members (Cross-Party)
- Mental Health
- Housing/Homelessness
- Substance Use Policy
- Lived/Living Experience
- Families/Carers

EAP/Commission members in the main will be drawn from across Wales with the inclusion of local representatives (lived experience and elected members) as well as wider-UK (lived experience and policy) representatives where appropriate.

Factors that will be considered in achieving a balanced Commission include:

- Gender and ethnicity
- Elected members – community members
- Statutory – voluntary organisations
- Substance use specific
- Other related disciplines (mental health, criminal justice, housing/homelessness, etc.)
- Academic – practitioner
- Clinical – non-Clinical
- Strategy & commissioning – Operational management
- Local (Swansea Bay) knowledge/experience – Welsh/rest of UK knowledge/experience

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EAP/COMMISSION

It is proposed that the Western Bay EAP/Commission will engage in an adaptive change process by:

1. Considering the nature, extent and impact of drug use and drug deaths across Western Bay.
2. Identifying and investigating the key causes and consequences of drug use and drug deaths for individuals and their families along with policy and practical measures to address these.
3. Seeking the views and involvement of all relevant local stakeholders including individuals with lived/living experience of accessing substance use services, partner organisations providing support &/or treatment, and public-sector service managers and frontline service providers.
4. Assessing the effectiveness of the strategic planning and delivery of services providing support and treatment for those who experience problems with substances within the APB area, and more broadly across community planning partners as relevant.
5. Considering evidence of what has worked elsewhere to combat drug use and drug deaths in order to a) inform the Western Bay approach and b) identify national learning lessons, including approaches to achieve prevention and recovery.
6. Making a set of evidence-based (outcome) recommendations regarding the local system of treatment and support that Western Bay APB (and its partners) have the ability and expertise to implement/change.
7. Making a set of considerations for Welsh Government regarding areas that Western Bay APB (and its partners) do not have the ability and expertise to implement/change – and any additional resource requirements that will be needed to support the required changes.

EAP/COMMISSION WORK PLAN

It is envisaged that the EAP/Commission will operate over an 18-month period, split into three phases:

- **PHASE 1:** The first phase of the EAP/Commission will focus on recruitment and briefing of all EAP/Commission members, with discussion and agreement of a full work plan, using the following draft proposals as a starting point. Early engagement will be made with all partner agencies and relevant stakeholders to discuss the EAP/Commission process, expectations of agencies/stakeholders, and to engender active engagement.

PHASE 1 WILL RUN FROM MARCH-MAY 2022.

- **PHASE 2:** The second phase of the EAP/Commission will be the main evidence gathering stage of the EAP/Commission. It will begin with a formal 'launch' event. At this launch event an 'Initial

call for Evidence' will be made available via an online survey.³ The results of the initial call for evidence, along with evidence gathered from a set of early focus groups and key informant interviews, will be considered by the EAP/Commission at its first full meeting in order to agree a set of 'key lines of inquiry'. It is envisaged that full EAP/Commission meetings will take place approximately every six weeks over a 12 month period following the launch event. These full meetings will be half-day sessions, generally split into two sections. The first section will be an 'open' session of the EAP/Commission with invited evidence speakers from across Wales aimed at identifying best practice and innovation within substance use and related disciplines. The second half of these EAP/Commission meetings will be a closed session for EAP/Commission members to discuss the evidence heard and agree further lines of inquiry between EAP/Commission meetings. It is also envisaged that the key lines of inquiry identified by the initial call for evidence will lead to the set-up of smaller sub-groups of EAP/Commission members who will be tasked with collating evidence around their key theme and subsequently writing-up the findings for the EAP/Commission's final report.⁴

PHASE 1 WILL RUN FROM JUNE 2022 – MAY 2023.

- **PHASE 3:** The final phase of the EAP/Commission will be the reporting phase where Figure 8 will lead in synthesising all the evidence gathered and write-up a draft of the findings for the EAP/Commission to discuss. The draft report will be shared (for comment) with the Western Bay APB and its partners including Swansea Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, Swansea Bay Health Board, and the South Wales Police Crime Commissioner. Feedback will be considered by the EAP/Commission and a final report produced and submitted to the Western APB and its partners. The report will outline recommendations on additional priorities for practical and achievable action to tackle and reduce substance use and drug deaths across the region. It is envisaged that the Western Bay APB will subsequently host a conference to launch the EAP/Commission's report. The report will be owned by the Western Bay APB although one of the constituent partners will need to provide liability cover for the EAP/Commission by formally adopting the report on behalf of the Western Bay APB. In the case of the Dundee Drugs Commission, Dundee City Council (as a legal entity) agreed to take ownership and provide

³ The Dundee Drugs Commission used an Early Call for Evidence (online) Survey to quickly establish the main lines of inquiry for the Commission's work, recognising that the Commission would be unable to look at every aspect of substance use and the harms caused by substance use. This survey had three key questions only, which made it easy for anyone to complete. The key questions were: (1) What are the challenges and barriers we face in Dundee to developing opportunities for supporting those who have problematic drug use and their families? (2) What examples are there of support and treatment improving the lives of those who have problematic drug use and their families in Dundee? (3) We would also like to know what issues you think (and why) the Commission needs to investigate and report on?

⁴ The Dundee Drugs Commission's initial call for evidence identified four key themes which led to the set-up of four sub-groups to lead on exploring these themes. The themes identified were: Leadership and Governance; Mental Health; Drug Deaths; Treatment and Support.

liability cover for the Commission. In practice, this meant that before the Commission's report was finalised and adopted it had to be checked and approved by the Dundee City Council's legal team to ensure it was fit for being released into the public domain.

PHASE 3 WILL RUN FROM JUNE – AUGUST 2023 (WITH A FINAL CONFERENCE, INCLUDING REPORT LAUNCH, TO BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2023).

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

In following the Dundee Drugs Commission model it is envisaged that the Western Bay EAP/Commission membership will include at least two local elected members who hold responsibilities within the areas of substance use and/or community safety.⁵ One of the critical initial conversations with the Chair/Vice-Chair will be to discuss and agree the nature of the relationship that these elected members will have as members of the EAP/Commission.

It is envisaged that there will be significant political interest in the work of the EAP/Commission as the findings will be relevant not just to Western Bay, but also for the rest of Wales. It is proposed that this involvement is managed through regular reporting to the Leadership Group which currently consists of Swansea Council, Neath Port Talbot Council and Swansea Bay UHB – although the PCC will also need to be invited into these discussions.

It is also envisaged that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Facilitator of the EAP/Commission will work closely with the Communication Teams of SBUHB and Swansea/NPT Councils to manage any wider media and political interest

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT REQUIRED TO ENSURE THE EAP/COMMISSION ACHIEVES ITS AIMS

The support of the area Leadership Group is required to ensure that all partner agencies are encouraged to fully engage with, and actively participate in, the evidence gathering opportunities provided by the EAP/Commission.

The Chair, Vice-Chair and Facilitator of the EAP/Commission will need regular access to the Leadership Group to update on progress and discuss any barriers to evidence gathering or areas of significant concern at the earliest opportunity.

⁵ The Dundee Commission has included an SNP member (who is the Chair of the Integration Joint Board) and a Labour member (who is the leader of the local Labour party). These two elected members agreed from the outset to work closely together to support the work of the Commission.