

Children Affected by Parental Substance Misuse (CAPSM)

Rod Burns

CAPSM/Children's Disability Issues Team
Safer Children, Stronger Families Division
Scottish Government
(0131) 244 0253
rod.burns@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Introduction

- Children and young people affected by parental substance misuse are amongst the most vulnerable in society
- Scottish Ministers committed to ensuring they receive the support, care and protection they need to share in the same high aspirations and outcomes we want for all of Scotland's children
- Actions to support children and young people outlined in chapter five of 'The Road to Recovery', the recent drugs strategy, 'Getting it Right for Children in Substance Misusing Families', represent a focused and child-centred approach

Introduction, contd

- Important to recognise that children, young people and family issues are not footnoted, or treated as additional or secondary concerns within the drugs strategy, but highlighted in their own right
- Alongside preventing drug use, promoting recovery and enforcement, CAPSM is a key dimension of Ministers' approach to drugs (and alcohol) issues
- Also important to note the Getting it Right reference within the title of the chapter itself – Getting it Right for Every Child fundamental to this approach

Introduction, contd

- Plan today to touch briefly on where the policy has come from, Ministers' intentions in setting out the actions within the chapter, planned work, including Getting it Right dimensions, and the implementation process
- Conscious that in many ways the real knowledge and expertise, as well as the passion for change, resides in you – so am very much in listening mode, and hope to gain a lot from today's discussions
- Also a new 'slimline' team – me, at present, with a second member of staff currently being recruited – so the whole team's available at the details above, and I'm keen to keep in touch!

Background

- Original UK ACMD report 'Hidden Harm' revealed depth and seriousness of the problem, Scottish Executive responses and action plans developed initial government thinking and actions, *Hidden Harm – Next Steps* (2006) outlined comprehensive strategy for tackling the issue
- *Hidden Harm – Next Steps* outlined a complex agenda: cross-cutting, 92 actions across numerous sectors, systems, delivery partners – and while achieving a lot, presented numerous challenges in implementation
- The approach outlined in 'The Road to Recovery' more focused, child-centred, and orientated towards prevention, early intervention and support for families, as well as risk management

Actions and Intentions

- ‘Getting it Right for Children in Substance Misusing Families’ focuses on three key themes within CAPSM work, and sets out a range of cohesive strategic actions rather than numerous workstreams
- These themes include
 - Improving identification, assessment, recording and planning and information sharing
 - Building the capacity, availability and quality of support services
 - Strengthening the consistency and effectiveness of immediate risk management
- As with development of the overall strategy (series of expert reports, SACDM and others; extensive Ministerial/official engagement), chapter five resulted from in-depth discussion with practitioners and other stakeholders of key issues

Actions and Intentions, contd

- However – not losing the baby with bathwater: important part of these discussions was identifying and acknowledging where existing practice and tools worked (such as GOPR), and seeking to build on what works
- Also central role of Getting it Right as the underpinning philosophical approach, and explicit connection with the long-term approach to alcohol and the emerging early years framework
- Intention to ground a supportive national approach, which was focused and child-centred, marking change of direction towards early intervention and support for families, in key identified needs and issues

Getting it Right

- Getting it Right for Every Child the foundation for work with all children and young people (including adult services where parents are involved) – programme for long-term change, putting children at the centre of thinking and action
- Builds from universal health and education services and drives to improve outcomes for children and young people by changing the way adults think and act to help all children and young people grow, develop, reach their full potential
- To get it right for every child we need a positive shift in culture, systems and practice across services – in CAPSM terms, both children’s services and adult services, and both drugs and alcohol

Getting it Right, contd

- Key that children and families become more involved, understand what is to be done to help them, what they must also do to help themselves
- Change happening across Scotland – pathfinder projects in Highland, four site domestic abuse pathfinder, learning partnership with North & South Lanarkshire, others being explored with Angus, Edinburgh, West Lothian, and many other areas developing shared assessment, information sharing
- Scottish Government also facilitating an online learning community: in process of testing its operation before opening up to invited representatives. Opportunity to share information and experience

Planned Actions

- Clear that policy and practice landscape very complex, challenging – but Getting it Right already achieving significant streamlining of processes (Highland moved from 29 separate processes, 63 possible different meetings around a child, 108 documents towards a single system, with one child’s planning meeting, common recording of information)
- This kind of sensible, efficient child-focused work needs to underpin CAPSM approaches, and one reason why chapter five functions in a strategic way
- Quick look at actions

Planned Actions, contd

- *Improving identification, assessment, recording and planning and information sharing*, including actions around:
 - Provision of ongoing multi-agency training to help identify children at risk at an early stage: key to strengthen practitioners' role in identifying children at risk, drawing in colleagues, sharing information
 - To support the sharing and embedding of good practice around single and inter-agency assessment of and planning for children: building on Getting it Right pathfinder experience
 - Upgrading of eCare Framework to improve inter-agency information sharing, especially on most vulnerable citizens such as children

Planned Actions, contd

- *Building the capacity, availability and quality of support services, including actions to:*

- Promote the creation of integrated services to provide equality of access to treatment for all drug users across Scotland: this action explicitly acknowledges the needs of children *and* parents

- Strengthen the focus of adult substance misuse services on the needs of children and families: seeking to rectify sometimes apparent gaps in family/child focus (in particular in alcohol services?)

- In the context of the Early Years Framework, work to improve parenting capacity: a key aspect of supporting children at source

Planned Actions, contd

- *Strengthening the consistency and effectiveness of immediate risk management*, including actions to:
 - Develop a risk assessment framework to support appropriate and consistent intervention in the management of immediate risk
 - Develop and disseminate effective strategies to engage parents, including compulsory measures as appropriate – measures, again, to be developed within a Getting it Right context (no longer seeking additional SW powers)
 - Promote collaborative working between Child Protection Committees and ADATs in planning and meeting needs

Structures and Implementation

- Clear that even with more strategic actions, harnessing the commitment to change and energy of the many groups and individuals within CAPSM work remains challenging
- Established a Project Board to take forward implementation – accelerated timescale (meeting every six weeks), membership from SG policy/analytical colleagues/CoSLA/voluntary sector, with each action assigned to a single lead with key responsibility for both progressing and reporting on that action, drawing in colleagues as necessary
- Intended to generate and maintain momentum on the CAPSM agenda, enabling empowered members to carry forward actions

Next Steps

- Project Board met in early September to agree membership, remit (around 16 members, all of whom have committed to long-term increased frequency schedule)
- Next meeting 27 October, chaired by Lesley Fraser (Deputy Director, Safer Children, Stronger Families)
- Committed to engaging all relevant practitioners, stakeholders in ongoing implementation, and to regular updates
- Currently developing timetable for actions