

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 9 NOVEMBER 2000

NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval for the provision of a needle exchange facility by Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS Trust from the Bridge Project premises in Kilmarnock and Cumnock.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The primary aim of needle exchange schemes is to encourage injecting drug users to stop sharing injecting equipment thereby reducing the spread of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C.
- 2.2 Needle exchange services within East Ayrshire are currently provided by the Primary Care NHS Trust (Harm Reduction Team, Addiction Services) from three static sites and in the south of the authority by the Outreach Backpacking scheme.
- 2.3 The Outreach Backpacking Scheme was the subject of a report to Policy and Resources Committee on 10th September 1997 (Page 2449 Item 12).
- 2.4 The Council provides no specialist addiction services but jointly with Ayrshire and Arran Health Board funds the Bridge Project (which has operational bases in Kilmarnock and Cumnock) to provide counselling and support services to drug users.

3. NEED FOR NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

- 3.1 In 1998/99 32% of injecting drug users known to services in Scotland reported sharing injecting equipment within the previous month. This reflects a continuing upward trend.
- 3.2 Needle and syringe exchange schemes are accepted as being an essential component of strategies aimed at reducing the harm to injecting drug users and their families through the prevention of blood borne viruses, particularly HIV and Hepatitis C.
- 3.5 Hepatitis C can have a significant impact of the health of individuals. It is estimated that as many as 86% of drug users in Scotland have contracted the virus. The impact may not become fully apparent until some 20 years after contraction with consequent implications for the planning and delivery of services.

3.6 In addition to helping to ensure that drug users use new and sterile equipment needle exchange services can also:

- (i) Advise on harm reduction e.g. safer injection and safer sex practices
- (ii) Advise on primary health
- (iii) Act as a referral agency to other organisations

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY

4.1 Discarded needles in public places represent a community safety and public health concern.

4.2 There have been a number of recent episodes in East Ayrshire in which the discovery of needles has attracted media attention.

4.3 The pilot study in East Ayrshire of the backpacking needle exchange scheme indicated a return rate of 115% (7433 sets issues, 8562 returned) thus reducing the number of needles in circulation.

5. PROPOSAL TO EXTEND NEEDLE EXCHANGE FACILITIES

5.1 In addition to the needle exchange service already described in Section 2.2, the Primary Care NHS Trust has operated a restricted needle exchange service to existing service users since 1993 within the Bridge Project in Ayr and since 1997 the Vernon Street Centre, Saltcoats and Townhead Centre, Irvine agencies operated by North Ayrshire Council (Social Services Directorate).

5.2 These restricted schemes have operated successfully with no incidents, no finds of discarded equipment and many thousands of exchanges.

5.3 Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS Trust has formally requested that such a service now be extended to the Bridge Projects in Kilmarnock and Cumnock.

5.4 The needle exchange scheme would be operated by Bridge Project staff under the supervision of the Harm Reduction Team (Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS Trust) and available to existing service users.

5.5 Additional specialist clinics (typically weekly or fortnightly) would be operated by Harm Reduction Team Staff. Strict protocols and operational procedures would be installed and appropriate training would be provided to staff.

5.6 Both Bridge Project premises are located in town centre (non residential) locations.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil

7. FINANCIAL/ PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Agree to the provision of needle exchange services from the Bridge Project as described in the report
- (ii) Requires the Director of Education and Social Services to submit a report on the progress of the service in one year.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
6 October 2000
Enc (0)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

For further information on this report please contact Andy Macdonald, Service Officer (Addiction and Carers) on (01563) 576991 or Jackie Donnelly, Principal Officer, Community Care on (01563) 576931.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : ANDY MACDONALD

AGENDA