



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Working Together To Reduce Harm

Substance Misuse Annual Report
and Forward Look 2019



Introduction

In October 2008, the Welsh Government published its 10 year Substance Misuse Strategy **Working Together to Reduce Harm**. This strategy sets out a clear national agenda for tackling and reducing the harms associated with substance misuse in Wales and has been supported by a series of detailed delivery plans which inform how the Welsh Government, in partnership, intends to implement the actions contained within the strategy. The latest delivery plan covers the period 2016-18 and the conclusion of the 10 year strategy period .

This Annual Report provides an overview of the key activity across Wales during 2018/19 and identifies key challenges going forward, over the next 12 months.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Public Health Wales document:

Data Mining Wales – The annual profile for substance misuse 2018-19. It is accessible from the Public Health Wales site: www.publichealthwales.org/substancemisuse

and the

Treatment Data – Substance Misuse in Wales 2018-19.

<https://gov.wales/drug-misuse-dependency>

Welsh National Database for Substance Misuse (WNDSM) annual report¹:

<https://gov.wales/drug-misuse-dependency>

Substance misuse is a major health issue that affects the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The Welsh Government priorities for substance misuse were set out in our substance misuse delivery plan 2016–2018 which was developed following significant consultation with a range of key stakeholders.

The Welsh Government’s aim is to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse to enable them to make informed choices and to know where they can seek out help and support. We continue to recognise the priority of this work and in April 2019 funding for Area Planning Boards was increased by over 10% so we now invest almost £53 million annually.

¹ Both reports contain more detailed information in relation to the caveats surrounding the data presented in this report.

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

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Development of Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-22

Over the past year we have worked with a range of stakeholders and considered evidence to prepare the Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019 – 22. This has been informed by the evaluation of the 10 Year Substance misuse Strategy 'Working Together to reduce harm' 2008-2018 which was published in April 2018 and highlights positive achievements over the lifetime of the strategy.

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/review-working-together-reduce-harm/?lang=en>

In addition Health Inspectorate Wales undertook a review of Substance Misuse Services which was published in 2018. <https://hiw.org.uk/substance-misuse-services-wales>

Both highlighted that significant progress has been made. In developing the new plan evidence from the reports and wider was used to inform this work and engagement events were held across Wales for stakeholders, including service users, over 200 people attended these. This confirmed that the key aims of the Strategy remain relevant:

- Preventing Harm;
- Support for individuals – to improve their health and aid and maintain recovery;
- Supporting and protecting families;
- Tackling availability and protecting individuals and communities via enforcement.

Over the 10 years of the strategy almost 80,000 individuals accessed treatment services in Wales.

Key Themes in 2018/19

Education and Awareness

Preventing future substance misuse is as important as treating the established problem and we want everyone to be aware in Wales of the consequences of misusing drugs or alcohol, or about where they can seek help and support. Projects to educate and raise awareness include:

Dan 24/7



Dan 24/7 is a free and bilingual telephone drugs helpline providing a single point of contact for anyone in Wales wanting further information or help relating to drugs or alcohol.

In 2018/19 there were **4,337 calls** to DAN 24/7, a **16% increase** on 2017/18. Traffic to the website has also **decreased by 7%** during the same timeframe.

Welsh Government, in conjunction with our national helpline DAN 24/7 continues to support an initiative across Wales to get to those hard to reach areas. This initiative utilises a van with digital display enabling us to spread messages within hard to reach areas, allowing us to react quickly to any current trends, warnings in relation to drug use and provide both educational and harm reduction information. In addition, the campaign also promotes the national DAN 24/7 helpline.

Social media continues to be important in both raising awareness of the national DAN 24/7 helpline and in getting harm reduction messages out to target groups. It has proved to be especially useful in providing drug alerts, links to drug information on the DAN 24/7 website when an area has a problem with a specific drug and also in engaging with other services across Wales.

The Dan 24/7 website can be accessed via the following link: www.dan247.org.uk



Support in Schools / Children and Young People

SchoolBeat.org is a bilingual site from the **All-Wales School Liaison Core Programme**, providing information and resources for teachers, pupils and parents to follow up on the lessons provided to primary and secondary school children by our School Community Police Officers.

For the academic year **2018-19**, **100%** of schools in Wales were accessed under the All Wales Schools Liaison Core Programme.

www.schoolbeat.org

Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 provides a legislative basis for addressing the longstanding and specific health concerns around the effects of excess alcohol consumption – to improve and protect the health of the population of Wales. Put simply, price matters. Evidence demonstrates that the excessive intake of alcohol causes harm and the likelihood of harm is proportionate to the amount of alcohol consumed. There is also a link between drinking at harmful levels and the availability of cheap alcohol.

The Act will introduce a minimum price for alcohol supplied in Wales and make it an offence for alcohol to be supplied below that price. A minimum price will set a floor price, meaning that alcohol could not be sold or supplied below that price. It will not increase the price of every drink, only those which are currently sold or supplied at below any minimum price. Under the Act, the applicable minimum price will be calculated by combining the Minimum Unit Price, the strength of the alcohol and its volume. This formula specifically allows us to target those drinks currently sold at an unacceptably low price relative to their alcohol content.

The Act states that the level of the MUP will be specified in regulations. The Welsh Government consulted on draft regulations between September and December 2018 and its preferred initial level of the MUP of 50 pence. The Welsh Government has laid draft regulations specifying a 50 pence MUP on 15 October 2019, with the view to implementing a MUP of 50 pence from 2 March 2020, subject to the approval of the National Assembly for Wales. Further information and guidance to support implementation will be made available ahead of then. Welsh Government will be working with retailers and local authorities to support implementation and promote awareness of the requirements of the legislation. The Welsh Government will also be undertaking an evaluation of the new law. This will help assess its impact ahead of making a decision about whether to continue to have a minimum price for alcohol, after a period of five years.

<https://gov.wales/minimum-unit-pricing-alcohol>

<https://gov.wales/drug-misuse-dependency>



Our approach to tackling substance misuse in Wales is based on the core principle of harm reduction, by enabling, encouraging and supporting substance users to reduce the harms they may be causing to themselves, their families and communities. There are a number of harm reduction initiatives in place including:

Take home Naloxone

Naloxone is an emergency antidote to opiate overdose. It blocks opioid receptors to counteract the effects of opioid drugs (such as heroin, methadone and morphine), reversing the life-threatening effects of an overdose such as depressed breathing. Since 2011, the Welsh Government has successfully rolled out a programme to distribute Take home Naloxone Kits, following a successful pilot project launched in 2009 and an independent evaluation. This programme will remain a key developmental priority.

Take Home Naloxone (THN) is available from 58 registered sites. The number of sites supplying THN has increased year on year from 11 'pilot' sites participating in 2009 to 58 in 2018-19.

Since the 1st July 2009, a total of 9,033 individuals have been supplied with 22,977 THN Kits throughout Wales.

Take Home Naloxone Kits Issued in 2018-19:



Needle Syringe Programmes

One of the more serious outcomes of drug use, especially injecting drug use, is chronic infection with blood borne viruses like Hepatitis C and HIV.

Needle Syringe programme provide needles and other drug related paraphernalia to people who inject drugs, including image and performance enhancing drugs.

The main aim of needle and syringe programmes is to reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses and other infections caused by sharing injecting equipment, such as HIV, hepatitis B and C. In turn, this will reduce the prevalence of blood-borne viruses and bacterial infections, so benefiting wider society.

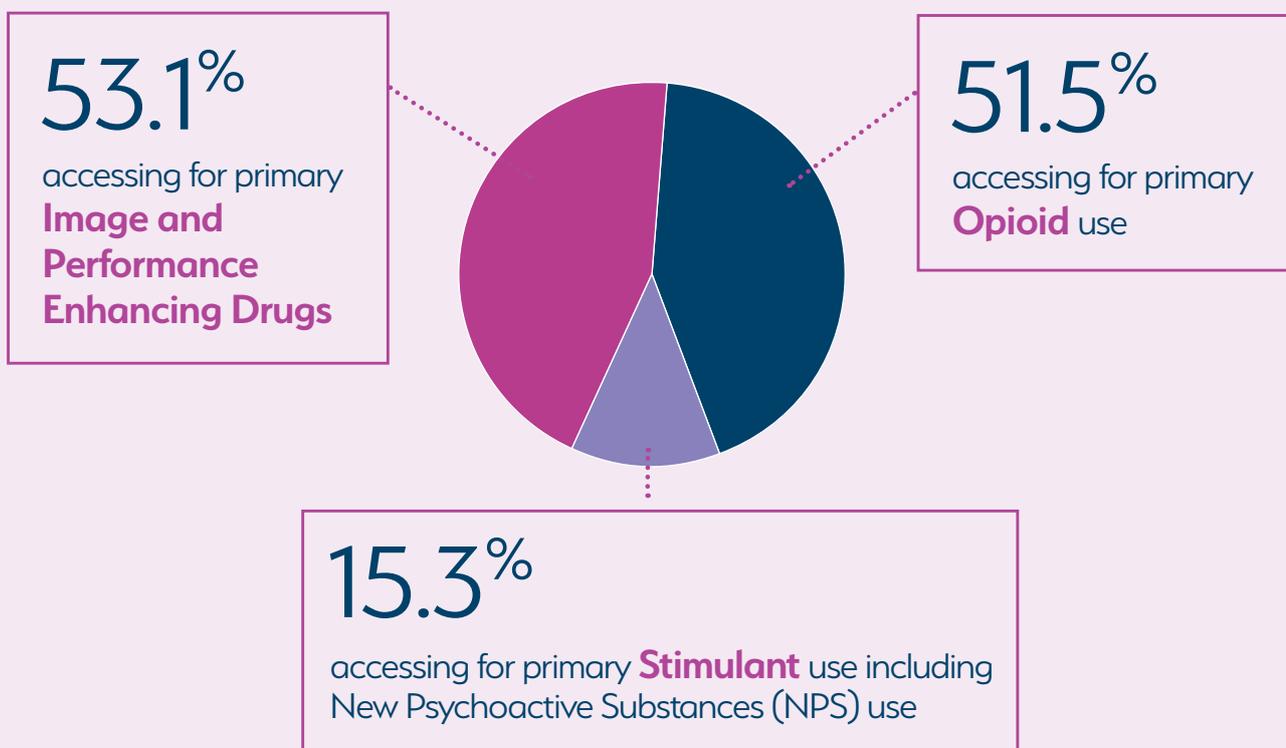
During **2018/19** the total number of individuals accessing **Needle Syringe Programmes** was **25,571**



14,172

where considered regular users of NSP services (more than 1 transaction in 2018-19 or report IPED use and 1 transaction in 2018-19 and previous year)

The analysis below looked at each substance group separately and individuals may be included in multiple groups. (e.g if an individual reported injecting cocaine and heroin they would be included in Opioids and Stimulant groups). Percentage is of regular individual's not total population.



WEDINOS

WEDINOS is a project to provide a system for the collection and testing of new psychoactive substances and combinations of substances, providing rapid and accurate information to individuals and organisations to reduce harms and provide pragmatic harm reduction advice. Since 2013 a total of 10,925 samples have been received, from across all seven health board areas.



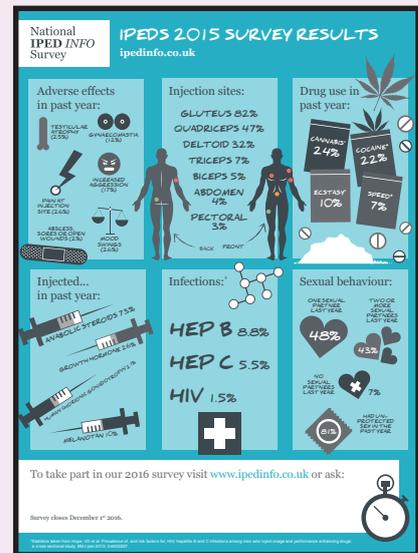
395 substances have been identified in combination and isolation.

- 2,731 samples were received representing an increase of 58 per cent from 2017/18
- 2,146 samples were analysed
- 145 substances were identified
- Median age of sample providers was 35 years (range 13 to 74 years)
- As in 2017-18, benzodiazepines were the most commonly identified class of mind altering / psychoactive substances
- Consistent with previous years cocaine was the most commonly identified substance. In 2018-19, this was followed closely by MDMA and ketamine.

Image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs)

Use of steroids and other image and performance enhancing drugs is widespread and increasing across the UK. Wales has been at the forefront in responding to this trend and the risks involved in using these types of drugs by:

- Providing evidence-based harm reduction advice and information via the website: www.ipedinfo.co.uk, with over 3,000 individuals accessing the site each month in 2018-19;
- Over 680 participants in 2016-17, the largest survey of its kind in the UK. The IPED survey is now undertaken every 3 years. During 2017-18, qualitative research has been undertaken both with IPED users and providers of services to evidence the facilitators and barriers to health care access.
- Providing training to relevant professionals and to schools across Wales via the IPED toolkit for young people aged 11-16. www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/75064



Treatment

High quality treatment is the most effective way of improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of problematic substance users. The provision of support ranges from basic harm minimisation and other advice; to detoxification, residential care and relapse prevention.

Referrals

There were

24,649

referrals into substance misuse services during

2018-19 and a further

2,195



referrals who did not attend prior to assessment.

In **2018-19** the number of clients assessed for problematic drug use was

8,747 (47.4%)

compared with

9,633 (52.3%)

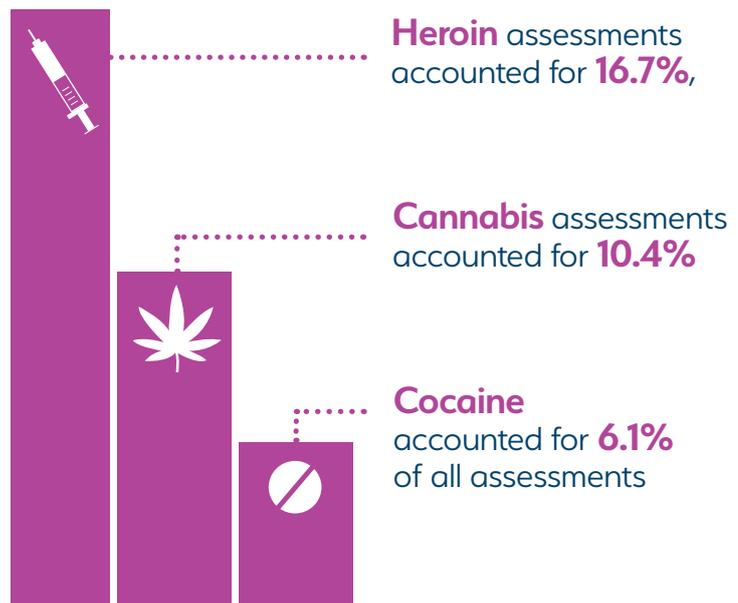
assessed for problematic alcohol use.

Assessments

The total number of clients assessed by specialist substance misuse providers in **2018-19** was

18,435

up **2.8%** from **2017-18**



1,379
were under 20 years old

16,013
were between 20-59 years old

1043
were 60 years old or over

Males accounted for **63.1%** of alcohol assessments and **71.1%** of drug assessments.

Treatment

13.9% of clients **Did Not Attend (DNA) treatment** or the contact ended before treatment began following the assessment stage.



The total number of clients starting treatment in **2018-19** was **16,072**, up by **1.8%** on **2017-18**.

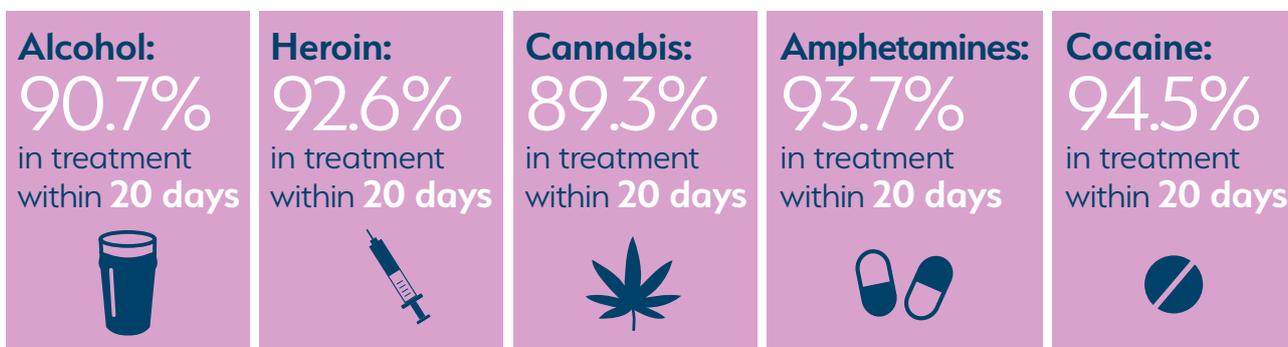


WAITING TIMES:

Target of **80%** of people to access Treatment within **20 working days** of referral.



During **2018/19** overall **91.3%** of people accessed services within **20 working days** of referral.



Treatment Outcomes

85.9% of people reported a **reduction in their substance misuses** in **2018-19** compared to **85.4%** in **2014-15**.



84.1% of people reported **improved quality of life** in **2018-19** compared to **82.9%** in **2014-15**.



81.2% of people have **completed treatment** either **problematic substance free** or have **reached their treatment goals** in **2018-19** compared to **66.0%** in **2014-15**.



Recovery

Recovery can be defined as “a process in which the difficulties associated with substance misuse are eliminated or significantly reduced and the resulting personal improvement becomes sustainable”. In Wales we fund and offer a wide range of evidence-based services and interventions in a range of settings throughout the substance misuse treatment system including:

978



Alcohol clients have received specific **Health and Recovery Support Interventions**.

963



Drug clients have received specific **Health and Recovery Support Interventions**.

Recovery Orientated Integrated Systems of Care (ROISC) guidance and training

The Recovery Orientated Integrated Systems of Care (ROISC) guidance sets out how providers can offer services and interventions to maximise the opportunity for service users to engage in appropriate support and treatment, thereby enabling them to make changes in their behaviour to improve their overall chances of recovery.

<https://gov.wales/substance-misuse-treatment-integrated-care>

Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service

The Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service helps people throughout Wales who are recovering from substance misuse or mental ill-health to find work or back into education and training.

It is a specialist programme catering to those who cannot or will not engage with mainstream services, or for whom mainstream services are not suitable. Free confidential peer support is provided by peer mentors who have personal experiences of substance misuse and/or mental ill-health.

Jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the Welsh Government with contributions from Area Planning Boards. It is delivered in Dyfed, Gwent, North Wales, Powys and Western Bay by Cyfle Cymru (a consortium led by CAIS including Hafal, Barod, WCADA and Kaleidoscope) and by Platform in partnership with Newlink Wales in Cwm Taf and Cardiff and the Vale.

By the end of April 2019, the service had worked with nearly 9,500 people across Wales including just under 5,000 people recovering from substance misuse. This has helped over 600 people to find work, almost 400 to gain work experience or complete volunteering opportunities and a further 1,400 to gain a qualification or work related certificate.



8 years ago Chris hit rock bottom...

After a relationship breakdown and losing his job in middle management, his drinking spiralled out of control, along with his mental health. He found out about the Out of Work Service from his Work Coach at his local Job Centre.

Chris was sceptical but after working closely with his Peer Mentor on training and job searches, and attending health and well-being workshops, Chris plucked up the motivation and courage to apply for a role on the factory line. Chris started his role on the production line and within 2 weeks was approached by the boss who said that he had made such a good impression she wanted him to try for the role as Storage Manager's Assistant.

Chris said:

"It's great. Over the last 8 to 10 years I haven't had much luck – some self-inflicted, some not – but it couldn't have turned out better. I'm now earning, achieving and doing something. I'm walking 25 miles a week to work, I've lost a stone in weight and my fitness and well-being has improved hugely. It's nice to have my independence – to buy a pint of milk with my own money, not from benefits. And the feeling of self-worth – I know I have gone up in the estimation of other people. With help and with the motivation and support of my son – I wanted to do it for him and give it all to him.

Thank you for the tremendous encouragement, support and guidance. To meet the Peer Mentor as a person, to sit down and spill the beans helped me to walk away with a great boost of confidence. I know I've not finished my journey yet but I've considered the end point and I'll continue to strive and achieve 10/10 in life both for myself and my son.

My next step is to get a car, something I would never have dreamt of doing 6 months ago!"

In work support project

The In Work Support Service promotes health and well-being in the workplace and breaks down barriers to employment for those with physical or mental health conditions.

The service provides free and rapid access to therapeutic support designed to help people with mental or physical health conditions to remain in employment.

To date, it has provided therapeutic interventions to

5,000 individuals

including some

2,800 people with musculoskeletal issues

and nearly

2,200 people with mental health conditions.

This is helping some

3,400 people to remain in work

and a further

1,600 to return to work.

The service is jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the Welsh Government and is available in North and West Wales.

In November 2018, we announced an additional £9.4m of EU and Welsh Government funding to continue the In Work Support Service to December 2022. The additional funding will significantly expand the service to support up to 12,000 people and introduce a new business support element that will seek to help up to 1,400 small businesses build a healthy workplace.

Population Outcomes

Alcohol consumption



In 2018,
18% of adults (or 1 in 5) reported drinking **over the weekly guidelines**. **Down from 2016 – 20%** (source: National Survey for Wales 2018)

Problematic Drug Use

Estimates of problematic use of opioids, cocaine and crack, amphetamine and new psychoactive substances indicate that there are around 52,600 individuals in Wales, aged 15-64 years who are using these types of drugs, including those in contact with health and criminal justice services. Further work is being undertaken to validate these estimates in Wales.

Hospital admissions – alcohol

The number of **individuals admitted to hospital** for an **alcohol specific condition** has increased by **1.8%** over the last 5 years.

Hospital admissions for **alcohol specific conditions** involving **young people (under 25)** has **fallen** by **9.8%** over the last five years to **999** admissions in **2018-19**.



The number of hospital admissions for **alcohol specific conditions** involving **working age adults (aged 25-49)** has remained relatively constant compared to 2014-15, decreasing by **0.3%**.



The number of **older adults (50 and over)** admissions in **2018-19** **increased** by **6%** compared to 5 years ago.



Hospital admissions – drugs

Hospital admissions related to use of **illicit drugs** increased by **5.7%** compared with **2017-18**. Admissions data suggests that use of multiple drugs may be increasing.

Amongst **young people (up to 25 years)** hospital admission related to **opioids** have fallen by **2.6%** between **2014-15** and **2018-19**.



Over the same period **cannabinoid** related admissions have **increased by 38.7%** (all age groups)



Opioids continue to account for considerably more admissions in **working aged adults** than any other substance, with **3,171** admissions in **2018-19**, an increase of **4.4%** from **2017-18**.



Hospital admissions involving **illicit drugs** in older people increased by **5.5%** in **2018-19** compared with the previous year.



Drug Related Deaths

In 2018, there were

327



drug poisoning deaths

(involving both legal and illegal drugs) in Wales.

Of these,

208



were **drug misuse deaths** (involving illegal drugs).

These are the highest levels recorded since comparable records began in 1993 and reflect the trend across the UK.

Figures for Wales for the most recent 6 years are given in the following table::

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Drug poisoning	208	168	238	271	260	327
Drug misuse	135	113	168	192	185	208

Alcohol Related Deaths

Alcohol related deaths have remained relatively stable over the past 5 years. (ONS, 2018)
There were 535 alcohol related deaths in Wales in 2018, a decrease of under 1% of these 406 were alcohol specific deaths.

Impact on Children and Young People

Hospital admissions for fetuses and new-borns affected by maternal use, or withdrawal from, of alcohol or other drugs of addiction have remained very stable over recent years.

There have been
48 admissions 
for **foetuses and new-borns** affected by
maternal use, or withdrawal from, **alcohol or
other drugs of addiction** in **2018-19**,
25% lower than at any point in the last
decade.

In **2018**, there were
600 cases 
of **children in need** receiving
care and support in which the
child's substance misuse was
identified as an issue.



There were also **4,450** cases of **children in need**
receiving care and support due to **parental substance misuse**.

Key challenges for the next twelve months



Tackling substance misuse continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government and a significant area to focus upon if we are to meet our ambitions in “A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care”. Substance misuse is a major health issue which affects individuals, families and communities and this plan sets out the priority areas we will focus on with our partners to achieve our ambition of reducing the harms associated with substance misuse.

We have increased our funding to support Area Planning Boards by over 10% in 2019/20 to help them undertake this work. In 2019/20, we are investing almost £53 million annually to deliver our commitments on this agenda.

The ‘Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022’ builds on the good progress made in the lifetime of the previous 2008-18 strategy ‘Working Together to Reduce Harm’. The overall aim of the delivery plan is to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse and to know where they can seek information, help and support if they need it.

The proposed priority areas for action in 2019-22 Delivery Plan include:

- Responding to co-occurring mental health problems which are common in substance misuse.
- Ensuring strong partnership working with housing and homelessness services.
- Ensuring that all prisons in Wales (and HMP Eastwood Park, women’s prison) have a coordinated, transparent and consistent service for those with substance misuse problems in prison.
- Support for families and carers of people who misuse substances.
- Ensuring that appropriate and responsive alcohol misuse services are in place, with the implementation of the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018.
- Improving access to services and ensuring people get the support and treatment when they need it.
- Strengthening our multiagency working and care planning to ensure peoples’ needs are met.
- Tackling dependence on prescription only medicines (POM) and over the counter medicines (OTC).

We will continue to work with partners on a range of initiatives, including Area Planning Boards and harm reduction groups within health board areas to ensure that drug and alcohol related deaths are minimised. In doing so, we remain committed to enabling and developing stronger collaboration across the substance misuse, mental health and housing sectors.

We will complete the development of a new Tier 4 residential treatment framework.

Funding has been made available through APBs to support people with complex health needs who have housing needs.

We will support progress in supporting people with co-occurring substance misuse and mental health by working with stakeholders to remove barriers to progress in this area.

Continue to tackle the increasing concern of Drug litter by sharing good practice models and collective learning from successful interventions.

Ensuring the recommendations from Health inspectorate Wales (HIW) review, are agreed in partnership with and implemented by a wider range of partners in order to improve the delivery of Substance Misuse services across Wales.

Prison health and wellbeing has been identified as a priority for 2019/20 for Health Boards who have responsibilities in this area. The Partnership Agreement for Prison Health (developed collaboratively by Welsh Government, HMPPS, the Health Boards and Public Health Wales) includes a fundamental focus on equivalence, whereby those in prison can live in environments that promote health and well-being and where health services can be accessed to an equivalent standard of those in the community.

Through the Partnership Agreement, there will be a specific focus on developing a new Substance Misuse Treatment Framework for prisons in Wales; new standards for mental health services in prisons; and a new framework for medicines management. HMPPS is leading on a work stream that focuses on the role of the wider prison environment and its key contribution to the health and wellbeing of prisoners. To increase the pace of service delivery and improvement – Welsh Government has also allocated an additional £1million of funding this year to improve health services in prisons.