

Drug and alcohol services in Scotland

Summary impact report (12 month)

The report findings and recommendations

1. The Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland report *Drug and alcohol services in Scotland* was published on 26 March 2009.
2. The report identified how much the public sector spent on drug and alcohol services in Scotland. It assessed whether evidence of need or what works determined how this money was spent and what impact this money has had. The report also reviewed partnership arrangements for the planning and delivery of drug and alcohol services.
3. The report found that Scotland has high levels of drug and alcohol misuse compared to the rest of the UK and Europe. In 2007/08, the public sector in Scotland spent £173 million on drug and alcohol services, but the wider costs to society were estimated at around £5 billion a year. The report concluded that spending decisions are not always based on evidence of what works or what is needed, and that there are no national minimum standards in terms of range, choice or accessibility for drug and alcohol services. The report also highlighted the need for the Scottish Government to set out the direction and the roles and responsibilities of partner agencies and how performance will be assessed.
4. The report contained 14 recommendations for the Scottish Government and the public sector. These are listed in Appendix 1, and charted against Audit Scotland's impact criteria.

Media interest

5. The report received extensive media coverage. In the 12 months since publication, there have been 136 media items - more than twice the average for Audit Scotland reports (51). Twelve months after publication, the report had 6,279 downloads from our website - this is well above the average (2,451) for Audit Scotland reports.

Parliamentary scrutiny

6. The Auditor General for Scotland gave a briefing to the Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee on 22 April. The Committee sought written evidence from the Scottish Government's Accountable Officers on a number of areas including the complex funding arrangements for services, the variation in service provision across the country and the lack of national performance management information such as service activity and costs. The Committee felt that the Accountable Officers' original response did not provide the information requested and asked for further details. The Committee agreed to note the Government's second response.

Significant developments

7. On the day of publication the report was welcomed by all major political parties and was debated at First Minister's Question Time where Annabel Goldie MSP called for a 'national summit' to discuss the issues raised in the report. The Minister for Community Safety then made a statement to Parliament in response to the report announcing a national event on 20 April. The Auditor General presented the report's key findings at this event and the Scottish Government welcomed the contribution the report made in identifying the actions needed to improve the effectiveness of drug and alcohol services. The Scottish Government also outlined a new delivery framework for local partnerships on alcohol and drug services that included some of the report recommendations.

8. The Scottish Government launched its new framework in April 2009 and 30 local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) were created in October 2009 (replacing the previous 23 local Alcohol and Drug Action Teams). Each ADP is expected to develop a local strategy that:
 - provides a clear assessment of local need,
 - identifies the key outcomes for drug and alcohol services
 - sets out clearly and openly the totality of resources that each partner is directing to achieve the drug and alcohol outcomes.

This is in line with the recommendations in our report.

Appendix 1 - Summary of report impact against Audit Scotland's framework for measuring impact

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
General Impact				
Action taken by the Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee	•			
Invitations to disseminate findings of report (e.g. at meetings and conferences)		•		•
Impact of report recommendations				
Public sector bodies should regularly review funding arrangements for drug and alcohol services to ensure that they maximise value for money and reflect levels of local need.	•	•	•	•
Public sector bodies should work with provider organisations to reduce the impact of complex and short-term funding on projects.	•	•	•	•
The Scottish Government and public sector bodies should work closely to develop a performance framework incorporating, but not limited to, existing targets. Further work is required to identify information on spend, activity and outcomes.	•	•	•	•
The Scottish Government and public sector bodies should ensure that there is a comprehensive range of services available in each local area.		•		•

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
<p>The Scottish Government and public sector bodies should develop unit cost information for different drug and alcohol services to help public bodies measure and compare the cost-effectiveness of various services.</p>		•	•	•
<p>The Scottish Government should set clear national minimum standards for drug and alcohol services including their range, quality and accessibility; receive assurance that these standards are implemented in line with set timescales; and ensure performance is regularly monitored and publically reported.</p>	•	•	•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should ensure that all drug and alcohol services are based on an assessment of local need and that they are regularly evaluated to ensure value for money. This information should then be used to inform decision-making in the local area.</p>	•	•	•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should ensure that service specifications are in place for all drug and alcohol services and set out requirements relating to service activity and quality. Where services are contracted, this specification should be part of a formal contract.</p>	•	•	•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should set clear criteria of effectiveness and expected outcomes for the different services that they provide, and undertake regular audits to ensure services adhere to expected standards.</p>	•	•	•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should use the Audit Scotland checklist to help improve the delivery and impact of drug and alcohol services through a joined-up, consistent approach.</p>	•	•	•	•

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
<p>The Scottish Government should clarify accountability and governance arrangements for the delivery of drug and alcohol services in Scotland and set out clearly the responsibilities of all organisations and partnerships involved in planning or delivering these services.</p>	•	•		
<p>The Scottish Government should systematically identify and disseminate good practice – including the details of local drug and alcohol-related interventions and treatments.</p>			•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should ensure that drug and alcohol partners are clear about their role in delivering effective and joined-up drug and alcohol services in Scotland.</p>	•	•	•	•
<p>Public sector bodies should put systems in place to routinely engage with service users and their families to ensure that their views inform the development of drug and alcohol services to address local needs.</p>	•	•	•	•