

BRIEFING NOTE – ALCOHOL PROJECT

- The need to focus on alcohol as a key area of health policy relating to other issues was identified as part of the “Health Round Table” meeting on 30th January 2013
- This decision is supported by the developing Newcastle-under-Lyme Health and Well-Being Strategy which focuses on growing obesity levels as a major population trend and further identifies alcohol as a significant risk factor leading to a number of clinical symptoms and conditions
- This position is supported by the Newcastle-under-Lyme Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy, which identifies alcohol as a major factor in issues such as domestic violence and anti-social behaviour
- The overall aim – in terms of outcomes – of these strategic positions is to reduce treatment costs; ensure better mental and physical health; and – from a crime perspective – seek to reduce levels of offending and fear of crime
- Related to the local strategic position described above, there is a stated aim nationally for public health issues to be dealt with in partnership and for work to be based on issues set out in the JSNA for the area and focused on areas like alcohol as a key issue relating to health improvement. The alcohol project referred to here is a partnership-based piece of work involving the Borough/County Councils and Public Health – it would be beneficial for the CCG to be involved as well for the reasons set out below
- Statistics show that, as part of this wider concern about alcohol, around 18,000 of the 16+ population in the Borough (17.3%) of the population are classed as being involved in “increasing risk drinking”, and 6,000 in “higher risk drinking” (5.9% of the population). Both these percentage figures are higher than both the West Midlands and English averages
- In addition to these figures, alcohol-related admissions in Newcastle have increased by 42% between 2008/9 and 2011/12 – a rise which is 8% greater than the national average. Newcastle has the second highest rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions in the county of Staffordshire
- A range of services are in place which seek to deal with these issues – these include brief advice and extended brief interventions; hospital liaison and inpatient detoxification
- In addition, a number of community programmes are up and running including the ‘Strengthening Families’ Programme and social norming activities carried out around alcohol use and misuse
- The cost of treatment are vastly more than prevention and the latest commissioning plan from the Staffordshire Alcohol and Drug Executive Board supports this. Despite an explicit desire to focus more on prevention and early intervention, these two areas make up only 3.7% of the total commissioning budget for the county in 2013/14. This compares to 96.3% spent on treatment (from a budget of £11m)
- Based on the figures set out above, it is the contention of the project commissioned on 30th January (see above) that there are a number of people in the Borough who are

engaged in increasing risk drinking and higher risk drinking but who are not presenting themselves to a GP or health professional and so are not benefiting from any of the early/brief intervention services described above. The result of this situation is that these individuals are only seen for the first time by the health service when they are admitted to hospital as an acute case (usually via A & E).

- On the basis of this position, the cost of treatment to these people is much higher than it otherwise would have been had they been picked up earlier in the course of their alcohol use/misuse
- The suggestion coming through this work is that there requires some form of early detection or identification of these individuals in order to refer them to the appropriate organisation/practitioner
- The suggested pathway for this referral process is the ongoing “Let’s Work Together” project in Newcastle. LWT is a piece of work which is taking place across Staffordshire, having been piloted in Lichfield. The aim of LWT is to train home visitors and other professionals who come into contact with people in their own homes or communities to be aware of certain risk factors – it is clear that alcohol is one of these risk factors
- The training delivered to home visitors via LWT is in the form of a series of training and awareness sessions, sometimes involving forms of e-learning and the training is delivered from a range of professionals with varying organisational backgrounds
- In terms of the CCG’s role, it is clear that treatment – for the moment – needs to be resourced and that any changes in funding or commissioning patterns will take some time to feed through the system. From an LWT perspective, however, support from the CCG would be a welcome step forward and would assist in implementing the emerging findings from the alcohol work.
- This support could come in a variety of ways, including funding (LWT requires constant support and needs work to continue to develop it); staff time (people will be needed to lead on training sessions focused on alcohol); information (despite some statistical information as presented here, the project is short of information at the sub-borough level, whether it be LAP based or ward based); services (do additional services need to be provided to address the issues outlined here)
- The partnership between the CCG, Public Health, SCC, Police and NBC which could be brought together under the LWT banner would be a significant development not just for Newcastle but for the whole of Staffordshire and would offer a focus on alcohol which has not been seen elsewhere
- As referred to earlier, discussions on the project have already taken place with Sally Parkin on this issue and a project team comprising Mark Bailey (NBC), Denise Vittorino (Public Health) and Mark Hewitt (Staffs CC) is already in place and has been working on this area since the initial meeting in January 2013
- The project team sees LWT as a key piece of work which can be supported by different organisations acting in partnership, as well as being delivered by them. It is a Staffordshire-wide initiative and offers the potential to assist in this area of work.