

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Interim Executive Director of Social Work and Health

Council: 24 March 2010

**Subject: Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Initiatives -
HEAR (Help, Empathy, Advice and Reassurance)**

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with updated information regarding the HEAR Out of Hours Telephone Support Service.
- 1.2 This service was established to ensure that clients have support during times when they felt particularly vulnerable to relapse, i.e. when mainstream services were not operational.
- 1.3 A profile of calls received will be presented alongside an explanation of how that information is being used to identify trends.
- 1.4 Information regarding the development of Volunteer Befriending, linked to the HEAR Service, will also be provided.

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2008, Cllr J McColl put forward a motion for additional resources to enhance service accessibility for those living with problems associated to drugs and/or alcohol. This motion reflected views expressed by service users within annual surveys and via members of the local service user forum.
- 2.2 Council subsequently ratified the motion, which enabled the establishment of an out of hours telephone support service which would offer support, prevent relapse and as a result, assist in reducing the number of drug and alcohol related deaths and suicides.
- 2.3 Services commenced on 11th December 2008, with the first call being received on Christmas Eve 2008.
- 2.4 Regular progress reports have been requested by elected members. This report is the third such report submitted to Council. At the May 2009 Council meeting members requested a future report on developments. This report has been directed to the Council, rather than the Social Work and Health Improvement Committee in line with that Council request.
- 2.5 In line with the Scottish Government's drug strategy, The Road to Recovery (May 2008), the Hear out of hours telephone support service has been developing a befriending service which will offer additional supports and encourage clients to re-enter society through volunteerism.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Profile of Calls

The HEAR Out of Hours Telephone Service commenced on 11th December 2008 and currently operates for 15 hours, over 3 evenings per week (Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays).

3.2 Between December 2008 and February 2010 the total number of calls logged was 94; 55 directly received; 39 missed calls (dialled at a time when the service was not open). The majority of calls received were from women (44) compared to 11 calls received from men. Alcohol addiction was the predominant reason for the call (32 of those received), followed by callers looking for general information and support (14) and individuals seeking information and advice regarding misuse of drugs (9).

3.3 Regular analysis of the data has been used to adapt the times when services are operating, matching indicated peaks in calls (especially calls not received). This service was extended in 2009 from two nights to three per week. A carefully scripted message has also been adapted for calls outwith operating times.

Developing Befriending Support

3.4 During the development of HEAR services, it was recognised that a different type of support was also required to ensure that individuals could be directly supported to access services during normal hours of operation with the help of a “befriender” to accompany and support them.

3.5 That “different” support was tested in consultation with services users. Service users indicated the provision of a befriending service would enable clients to access appointments, not only with addiction service providers but to appropriate partner agencies such as general health, housing, training or employment services, all central to a holistic route to recovery.

3.6 This type of support will enable clients to gain confidence and become integrated into the local community once more.

3.7 In addition, the role of the volunteers, with their own recovery histories, is seen by service users as a beneficial element associated with the HEAR service. Therefore it is envisaged that 8 volunteer befrienders will be trained to provide support to clients across West Dunbartonshire.

3.8 A volunteer befriending training package, befriender job description and selection criteria is almost complete.

3.9 Funding through the Future Job Fund programme will enable the employment of a Befriending Support Worker and a Clerical Assistant, currently registered with Job Centre Plus as “long term” unemployed. Interviews have taken place, and Disclosure Scotland Reports and references are pending.

- 3.10 The initial task will be to identify, vet and start the Volunteer Befrienders. The Befriending Support Worker will support the volunteers through a tailored training programme before they commence working with individual clients.
- 3.11 Similarly, clients will be vetted prior to allocation of a volunteer befriender.
- 3.12 Volunteer Befrienders will be reimbursed for out of pocket costs incurred during the provision of befriending support to clients.
- 3.13 The long term outcome for Volunteer Befrienders is that their confidence will be raised, skills will be enhanced and they will have “real” volunteer experience that could open up employment opportunities.
- 3.14 Each volunteer will receive a development plan, which would be used to ensure that they develop skills which they feel are important to them as an individual and linked where appropriate to future education or employment opportunities.
- 3.15 In circumstances where Volunteer Befrienders express an interest in employment within or linked to the HEAR service, interviews will be guaranteed; if the criteria linked to potential posts is met.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 One Telephone Support Officer is employed for 16 hours per week, another Telephone Support Officer is employed for 7 hours per week, with additional sessional hours to enable the needs of the service to be met.
- 4.2 Two additional posts, a Befriending Support Worker (25 hours per week) and a Clerical Assistant (35 hours per week), have been interviewed, Disclosure Scotland returns will be required prior to them taking up post. Funding to enable the employment of the individuals indicated above has been secured via the Future Jobs Fund.
- 4.3 It is envisaged that at least 8 Volunteer Befrienders will be identified and trained with a view to commencing the service properly by July 2010.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Funding has been secured to maintain current operational levels of the HEAR service. Through the opportunity of Future Jobs Funds and funding secured through Scottish Government alcohol funds, the Befriending Service can be initiated.
- 5.2 Work to identify future funding possibilities is ongoing, with a view to expansion of the HEAR service for at least one additional session per week.
- 5.3 A protocol to enable Volunteer Befrienders to receive recompense for out of pocket expenses is in place to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** National care standards, alongside locally agreed performance targets, set parameters in which addiction services work. Services are required to ensure ease of access and to enhance rates of recovery. The HEAR service has begun to assist with these targets, providing services when other services are not available. It is projected the HEAR service will continue to grow in its reach and the new Befriending Service will further enhance service access.
- 6.2** Befrienders, with their own background in addiction, will benefit directly as well in their continued recovery through their volunteering experience, confidence gained and direct training and skills development.
- 6.3** The risk of HEAR folding, or the Befriending service not being established, would result in a knock-on effect in improving service access. Careful planning of these services minimises that risk.
- 6.4** There are also risks associated with enabling individuals in recovery to undertake the responsibilities of befriending. Protocols, including careful selection, training and supervision, minimise these risks.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this initiative at this stage of development. An impact assessment will be considered as part of the development of the Befriending service.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** As indicated within the previous paper to Council (November 2008), the Council motion from March 2008 provided an opportunity to establish a unique service to support individuals living with their own or someone else's alcohol or drugs problems.
- 8.2** Although the number of calls received thus far by HEAR appear to be relatively low, it should be noted that this equates well when compared with other similar services across Scotland at this stage of development.
- 8.3** The quality and caller outcomes remain high and continue to demonstrate the ongoing need for this type of service. Several very serious cases have been addressed through HEAR, including cases reflecting potential harm to the caller or another individual.
- 8.4** Hours will continue to be adapted to reflect trends identified through analysis of current data.
- 8.5** Work to progress the expansion of the service through the establishment of a befriending service will be progressed and should commence, by mid July, once volunteers have been identified, vetted and trained.

- 8.6** Elected Members are asked to:
- 8.6.1** Note the information regarding the profile of calls to the HEAR service.
 - 8.6.2** Note the information provided regarding the employment of a Befriending Support Worker and Clerical Officer via the Future Jobs Fund.
 - 8.6.3** Note the expansion of services via Volunteer Befrienders.
 - 8.6.4** Note the potential benefits for Befrienders in terms of recovery and future employment opportunities for these volunteers.

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Appendices: N/A

Background Papers:

Report to Social Work and Health Improvement Committee
19 September 2007, *10 Questions to a Better Service: An
Addiction Services Survey of Client Perceptions of Available
Services*

Report to Council, 26 March 2008, *Drug and Alcohol
Rehabilitation*

Report to Council, 26 November 2008, *Drug and Alcohol
Rehabilitation – Update*

*Report to Council, May 2009, Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation
– Update*

Wards Affected: All wards