



To: Community Care, Health & Wellbeing Thematic Board

On: 2 June 2016

Report by:

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## **Student Cannabis Awareness Campaign**

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Renfrewshire Community Care, Health & Wellbeing Thematic Board about a multi-agency project, which was targeted at students in Renfrewshire and aimed to challenge the 'normalisation' of cannabis use and address the apathy or lack of information, which young people often feel towards the health and social issues surrounding cannabis use.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the board:
- (a) Notes that the Multi-Agency Project plans to increase its range of resources and ways of engaging with the student population;
  - (b) Notes that the Project aims to produce a short film in collaboration with West College Scotland's drama students to be used as a central part of a Cannabis Awareness Training workshop;
  - (c) Notes that the workshop would be offered to both staff and students with the possibility of the workshop being adapted for future use in schools and youth organisations; and
  - (d) Agrees that a progress report will be submitted to a future Board.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Initially, a scoping exercise was conducted by Barnardos' and the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) to identify the prevalence of cannabis use within young people. A graduate intern was then employed for 6 months, to carry out additional research with students, in order to identify what were the key issues that they would like to know more about in relation to cannabis. The graduate intern then utilised the key messages to help design cannabis awareness resources for this student population.

- 3.2 The research highlighted that 90% of those young people who took part had friends or family members who have used cannabis, 70% had used cannabis themselves at some point and 80% were aware that cannabis is illegal. The scoping exercise also identified that whilst the majority believed that cannabis is addictive, many believed that it is no more dangerous than alcohol or tobacco. This data was used by the graduate intern to generate a variety of resources including USB, pens, bookmarks and posters aimed at the Renfrewshire student population.

The resources were popular with the West college Scotland students and thus the staff had enquired whether we could provide further training or awareness sessions to the staff and the students about cannabis and the local resources and support available to anyone wishing to change their cannabis use in Renfrewshire.

We worked with the Drama department at West College Scotland to devise a short play written by students for students), which would enhance the key messages obtained within the cannabis awareness resources already produced. The play highlighted highlight some the dangers of cannabis, with the aspiration that this may help challenge the 'normalisation of cannabis-use ' within the student population and inform the students of the local support services available to them. The play was a success with 81 students from West College Scotland attending and providing positive feedback around 'a change in their thinking and knowledge of cannabis issues'. Now we wish to film the play and use it as a central part of a training workshop which would be delivered to both staff and students working within schools, youth organisations and further education establishments.

## **4. Resources**

- 4.1 No additional resources are requested at this time until future work agreed and costings identified as appropriate.

## **5. Prevention**

- 5.1 A conclusion from the research carried out with young people and cannabis use, distinctly showed how widespread its use is within this population. It also highlighted the lack of knowledge amongst the students to the potential dangers of cannabis-use. Therefore this project is very important for the information it provides to students around the triggers, dangers and side-effects of cannabis use, as well as providing important information on local resources and support services available in Renfrewshire, if students wish to seek help for their cannabis use. The resources have been designed by students for students and so they are very engaging and relevant for this population and we believe that using the resources within a training workshop, will help the students of Renfrewshire to reduce or prevent future harm from cannabis-use.

## **6. Community Involvement/Engagement**

- 6.1 This cannabis awareness project has been multi-agency piece of work. The partners involved include Renfrewshire Council who recruited the Graduate Intern who was funded partly by the employer incentive and by Renfrewshire CHP. Other partners include the ADP, Renfrewshire HSCP, Barnardo's, West College Scotland and the University of West of Scotland.

These resources, designed and produced in Renfrewshire, have been so popular that other health boards and localities have enquired about using them. Thus, we are requesting that the partners on this Thematic Board can use their influence to ensure these cannabis resources developed in Renfrewshire are adopted nationally, as we have been informed by other Health Boards, that they are of a very high quality and not available elsewhere in Scotland.