

To: Leadership Board

On: 15 September 2021

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Alcohol and Drugs Programme Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 In late 2018, Renfrewshire Community Planning Executive Group agreed to establish an independent Commission to consider the true impact of alcohol and drugs use in Renfrewshire. Partners were concerned about the levels of drug and alcohol related harm in Renfrewshire and believed that there must be more that partners could do together to respond to these issues locally.
- 1.2 The Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission commenced in 2019, engaging with over 300 local people, families, frontline staff and groups and organisations to hear about what needed to change in Renfrewshire.
- 1.3 The final stages of the Commission's work were impacted by the pandemic, however Commission members were very aware of the ongoing impact that COVID-19 was having in terms of alcohol and drug related harm, and were keen to finalise the report and its recommendations to ensure that partners could respond to these challenges collectively. In December 2020, the Commission's report was published, with the recommendations being fully endorsed by the Council and its partners.
- 1.4 Prior to the finalisation of the report, Council had allocated £2m of funding to support the local response to the Commission's recommendations, and in December 2020, £1.34m of this funding was allocated to address a number of key priorities identified by the Commission. These included supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, ensuring that services reach out and try to support people who use drugs and alcohol and their families, and that peer support and lived experience is a fundamental to recovery from alcohol and drug use in Renfrewshire.
- 1.5 A programme board was established to oversee the local partnership response to the Commission, and this is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

Partners are working very closely to ensure that all of the activities being progressed are joined up and make maximum use of the funding and resources available.

- 1.6 This has been particularly important in recent months, given the increasing focus at Scottish Government level on the response to the drugs death crisis, with additional funding being allocated to Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to respond to these issues at a local level as part of the national Drugs Death Mission. This has included for example additional funding to support families, to develop peer networks and to provide residential rehabilitation services. These were all recommendations made by the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission.
- 1.7 The main purpose of this report to the Leadership Board, is to provide an update on the local programme of work, which has progressed significantly since the last report to board provided in March 2021. It is clear from the publication of recent statistics in relation to alcohol and drug related deaths that the local response to the Commission and its recommendations is absolutely critical and must continue to be prioritised by all partners. These indicate that in 2020, drug related deaths increased by 49% in Renfrewshire, whilst alcohol related deaths increased by 22%.
- 1.8 Every death experienced is a deeply felt loss to local people and families, with many others being impacted and harmed by drug and alcohol use unfortunately more widely. The work that partners are progressing as a result of the Alcohol and Drug Commission has ensured that partners in Renfrewshire are ready to respond to these issues together with local people, families and communities. Partners are committed to making things change, ensuring that there are real opportunities for recovery for local people in Renfrewshire.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Leadership Board note:
 - Renfrewshire's response to the recommendations of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission and;
 - The commitment of the Council and its partners to work together to address increasing levels of alcohol and drug related deaths and wider harm in Renfrewshire.

3. Background

- 3.1 In late 2018, Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Executive Group agreed to establish an independent Commission to consider the true impact of alcohol and drug use across Renfrewshire's communities. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 caused the Commission to pause its work, however this resumed in September 2020, with the Commission's final report being published in December 2021.

3.2 The report sets out the Commission's main findings and provides 27 recommendations to guide the local response. Priority actions were identified in terms of:

- Urgently addressing issues in relation to mental health service provision, including provision for young people.
- Considering trauma as part of everything that partners do in Renfrewshire – this is fundamental to reducing or preventing problems with alcohol and drug use and supporting recovery.
- Introducing a whole system approach to supporting people with their alcohol and drug use.
- Increasing the reach and capacity across the whole system of support for people using alcohol and drugs.
- Making urgent changes to the buildings from which services are provided.
- Reviewing the support that is available to families impacted by drug and alcohol use – at all stages of life.
- Partners providing leadership around alcohol supply, promotion and availability.
- Valuing lived experience as part of the approach to recover in Renfrewshire: - developing meaningful relationships with recovery organisations and building strong partnership peer support models.
- Tackling stigma around alcohol and drug use and supporting opportunities for social connection across Renfrewshire to support recovery.

3.3 The report and its recommendations were endorsed by Council, Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board and Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Executive Group, with full support gained to respond to these recommendations on a collective basis.

3.4 Prior to the report's publication, Council allocated £2m of funding in March 2020 to support the emerging recommendations of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission. Given both the impact that the pandemic has had on local people and communities and the urgent nature of some of recommendations identified within the Commission's report, officers worked with partners to bring forward an initial tranche of funding proposals which would target the priorities identified as being most urgent by the Commission.

3.5 In December 2020, Council agreed to allocate £1.34 of the £2m allocated funding to support a range of projects which will aim to pilot new ways of working across the community planning partnership, with the opportunity to use this learning to transform the way in which people receive support across Renfrewshire. Section 4 of this paper provides an update for members on this programme of work.

4. Responding to the recommendations – a partnership response

- 4.1 The allocation of £2m funding provides a significant opportunity for the Council and partners to drive an ambitious programme of change which will seek to fundamentally reduce the impact of alcohol and drugs on local people and communities across Renfrewshire. This is particularly important given the impact of COVID-19 in Renfrewshire, which has exacerbated issues being faced by individuals, families and communities in relation to alcohol and drug use and mental health in particular.
- 4.2 In recent months £817,000 of Scottish Government funding has also flowed to Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to target a range of specific priorities including family support, residential rehabilitation services, drug related deaths, outreach and recovery. The Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) is the principal mechanism by which partners across Renfrewshire have worked together in recent years to respond to alcohol and drug related harm. Local alcohol and drug services were subject to a review prior to the Alcohol and Drugs Commission commencing, and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership have also been overseeing the development of integrated recovery-focused services in Renfrewshire, in addition to more recent service developments being delivered through the additional Scottish Government funding.
- 4.3 An **Alcohol and Drugs Programme Board** has been established to drive the local response to the Commission, ensuring that all partners work together, join up service developments and maximise the resources available.
- 4.4 Partners have prioritised a range of actions in response to the key recommendations made by the Commission in late 2020. Section 5 of this report provides updated information for elected members on the level of alcohol and drug related harm in Renfrewshire. Increasing levels of drug and alcohol related deaths in Renfrewshire 2020, strongly reinforce the need for partners to continue to progress these activities at pace. Key developments which have been progressed include:
- **Assertive Outreach:** An Outreach Crisis Response Team is being established in Renfrewshire. This will involve the HSCP providing short, focused periods of support, maintaining contact through various means including telephone and digital as well as face to face engagement. The primary purpose of the service will be to provide an out of hours response (evening and weekends) with some overlap to facilitate follow up engagement and referrals to mainstream services. It is anticipated that the service will be operational before Christmas.
 - **Crisis Based Mental Health Support:** This service is currently being put into place as a test of change for a period of 18 months, with a view to considering opportunities to provide support through mainstream support services if issues such as barriers to access and stigma can be addressed successfully.
 - **Intensive Mental Health Support for Children and Young People:** Service proposals are being developed which will support the delivery of a children and young people's mental health strategy.

This includes proposals to develop help and support with lower level needs, to very specific interventions which support children and young people and their families with more complex needs. A young people's wellbeing service is currently being progressed, and subject to required recruitment we would anticipate this being in place early in 2022.

- **Trauma informed and Responsive Renfrewshire.** Recognising the fundamental issue of trauma that local people and families told Commission members they had experienced, work has commenced on a partnership programme of work to ensure that recognising and responding to trauma is part of every service we deliver. Recognising that trauma often arises as a result of negative relationships, we will focus on developing positive relationships which support local people and their families. An initial action plan will be developed by end October 2021.
- **Renfrewshire Peer Support Model in Renfrewshire:** The Commission heard that often people who use drugs and alcohol would benefit from peer support as they worked towards recovery. Partners are aiming to ensure that Renfrewshire is a place where recovery and lived experience is valued and recruiting peer support workers locally to connect with and support people on their recovery journey. This model is now being rolled out with a co-ordinator appointed and recruitment of peer workers ongoing.
- **Hidden Harm** – it is important that partners across Renfrewshire fully understand the level of hidden harm in Renfrewshire, recognising that local drug and alcohol services will not engage with all people experiencing issues with alcohol and drugs locally. This is important to understanding how services can better reach out to support people at an early stage. Independent research was commissioned and completed by We are With You over summer 2020, and the findings from this research are currently being considered.
- **Recovery Change Fund:** It is important that support is available to people across the whole continuum of needs in relation to alcohol and drug use. An important source of support is often within the community from local groups and organisations responding to local need. Proposals are currently being developed in partnership with Engage Renfrewshire to launch a Recovery Change Fund over Autumn and Winter 2021, whereby community groups and organisations would be able to apply for funding to respond to the gaps in local provision identified within the Commission's report.
- **Alcohol Policy** – A partnership officer has been recruited to drive policy change across Renfrewshire, focusing on issues such as alcohol availability, supply and promotion and also how employers across Renfrewshire can identify and respond to support people and their families who are affected by alcohol use.
- **Whole Family Review of Support:** Families told Commission members that they often felt they had nowhere to turn when their loved one was in crisis and that support was needed to help them to manage the issues that were being experienced. An independent review of existing family support provision Renfrewshire has now commenced and will engage with local families and front line staff to assess where possible gaps in provision exist and make recommendations on how to address these. It is anticipated this will be completed prior to Christmas 2021.

- **Enhanced Education and Training:** Work is underway to develop curricular content and programmes for young people with support from an external partners, with young people at the heart of the design and development as well as those with lived experience. Training opportunities are also being identified for teachers and other practitioners. It is anticipated this work will be completed by March 2022.
- **Developing wrap around support to support complex needs:** Partners are currently considering different options to support people with complex needs, who potentially need support from different services and organisations in relation to the issues they are experiencing. Renfrewshire was one of the first councils in Scotland to pilot the Housing First model, and work is underway to assess how this could be developed further, recognising that not all people who use alcohol and drugs will be engaged with a treatment service and may respond better to support from a different service or organisation. Subject to procurement and recruitment timescales, it is anticipated that the pilot will commence in early 2022.
- **Building based services** – An HSCP Property Review is currently underway. The Whole Systems Review of the Alcohol and Drugs Services and the Alcohol and Drugs Commission have identified that Back Sneddon Street is not fit for purpose for the nature of the service moving forward. An additional piece of work is being undertaken to review accommodation through a trauma informed lens to ensure that environments are suitable for the particular needs of service users, findings will influence our overall property strategy. Currently services are utilising space in three buildings:- Back Sneddon Street and the Torley Unit, with the majority of face to face treatment and interventions with service users now taking place at New Sneddon Street. The Team are also progressing the use of space in other buildings across Renfrewshire to support a shift to a more community-based model.

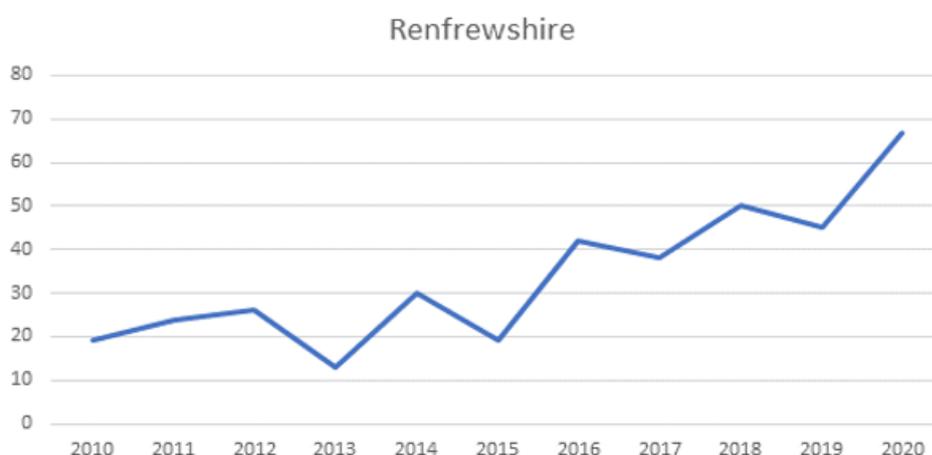
4.5 In addition, there are two further core projects that are being progressed by partners which will support the delivery of all other activities being delivered in response to the Commission's recommendations.

- **Listening and involving those with lived and living experience** – the strength of the Commission and its findings was and is, that these were gained through listening to people who use alcohol and drugs and their families, frontline staff, partners etc. It is important that this listening approach continues and importantly that local partners continue to engage with people with lived and living experience about the work that they are doing. A proposal is currently being developed with Scottish Recovery Consortium to ensure that lived and living experience is at the heart of what we do in Renfrewshire, as all partners work together to reduce alcohol and drug related harm and support recovery in Renfrewshire.
- **Tackling stigma and the use of negative language** – Partners are working on a *Language Matters* initiative, which will support all partners to challenge preconceptions and stigma around drug and alcohol use and promote positive conversations about recovery in Renfrewshire. Initial work on this initiative has demonstrated that the principles of language matters are equally relevant to work which is seeking to change the narrative around mental health, care experience and poverty.

- 4.6 Options are also being developed to support the evaluation of the programme, in order to ensure that all partners are able to monitor the impact of the initiatives being progressed.
- 4.7 The delivery of this programme of work remains a key priority for all partners and it is important that the programme continues to be delivered at pace given the significant harm that local people are currently experiencing in relation to alcohol and drug use.

5. Recent data in relation to alcohol and drug related harm.

- 5.1 Every year, national statistics are published in relation to the number of alcohol and drug related deaths in Renfrewshire. Whilst partners are in the process of implementing the local response to the Commission and its recommendations, every death is a tragedy deeply felt by local families and communities, and partners recognise that they must continue to do all that is possible to tackle this issue.
- 5.2 On 30 July 2021, NRS released the drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2020 statistics. The data sadly reveals a significant increase (49%) in the number of drug-related deaths in Renfrewshire (67) from 2019 and recognises that this highest in the last decade.

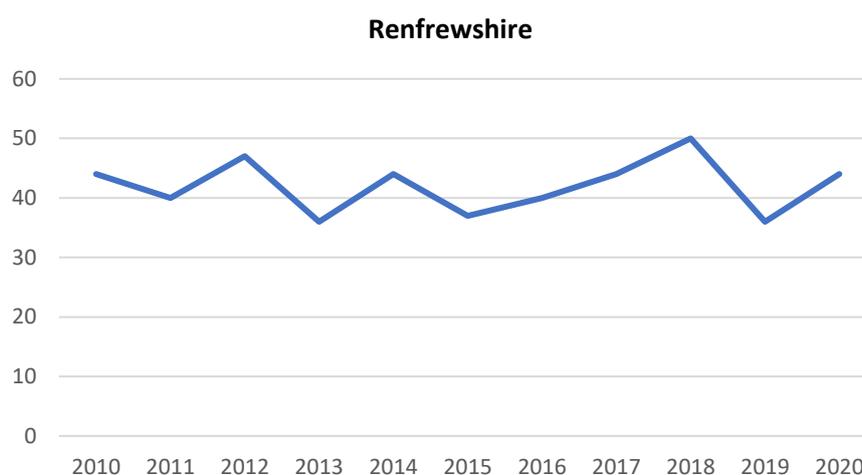


2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
19	24	26	13	30	19	42	38	50	45	67

- 5.3 The data also revealed that 1,339 drug-related deaths were registered in Scotland in 2020, this was the highest figure ever recorded since records began in 1996 and is an increase of 75 deaths on 2019 (5.9%). Renfrewshire had the fourth highest rate of deaths per 100,000 population and is above the Scottish average rate of deaths. Drugs like Etizolam remain a significant issue in Renfrewshire, which was found to be implicated in the deaths of almost two-thirds of those people that sadly died. The drug is perceived to be relatively harmless and like Diazepam, but much higher in toxicity.

Etizolam is relatively new drug in the last 5 years, featuring in almost 7 out of 10 drug deaths. Intelligence from Police Scotland confirms Etizolam is extremely cheap to buy and illegally manufactured in Renfrewshire.

- 5.4 On 17 August 2021, NRS released its 2020 data on alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland. The data revealed an increase in the number of alcohol-specific deaths both in Renfrewshire and Scotland.
- 5.5 There were 44 alcohol-specific deaths registered in Renfrewshire in 2020. This was an increase of 22% from 36 in 2019. This represents a rate of 23.6 per 100,000 population in Renfrewshire.
- 5.6 There were 1,190 alcohol-specific deaths registered in Scotland in 2020. This was an increase of 17% on 1,020 in 2019 and is the highest figure since 2008



when 1,316 deaths were recorded.

- 5.7 In addition to the work detailed in Section 4 to respond to the findings of the Alcohol and Drugs Commission, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership have also identified a number of very specific actions to tackle drug related deaths and wider drug related harm including:
 - The implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards with a focus on introducing same day prescribing and choice of treatment. Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Services (ADRS) will aim to offer 'same day' provision for hard-to-reach individuals as well as use of alternative medical treatments.
 - Enhancing current treatment options by recruiting a specific post to proactively support high risk individuals, who may have significant physical and mental health needs.
 - Recruitment of a Drug Deaths Prevention Officer to lead the development and delivery of a Drug Deaths Prevention Strategy. The post will be key in delivering a co-ordinated approach to preventing, reducing, and reviewing drug related deaths by working in partnership with key stakeholders.
 - Providing access to residential rehabilitation placements introduced as part of our choice of treatment options. A scoping exercise was recently carried out to identify abstinence-based services as suitable providers.

Plans are also underway to address the gaps in stabilisation and crisis service provision.

- Providing access to a harm reduction mobile service which will also be available out of hours. This will provide crucial healthcare and harm reduction services such as injecting equipment to reduce the incidence of blood-borne viruses (BBV) as well as BBV testing in the community. Additionally, the unit will distribute Naloxone and engage with individuals that would not typically access support and care services into treatment. Naloxone is a drug that can reverse the effects of an overdose caused by opioids, such as heroin or methadone. The mobile unit will target areas in Renfrewshire to increase engagement with difficult to reach communities.
- Working in partnership with third sector colleagues to establish an Overdose Response Team. The service will provide a rapid response to near-fatal overdoses by providing a short, focused period of support to each person and assertively engaging with mainstream alcohol and drug services.

5.8 One of the key developments being progressed to support recovery is the development of a recovery hub in Paisley. This will provide local people with improved recovery opportunities and increased pathways to and from other services, ensuring that they feel sufficiently supported and connected throughout their recovery journey. The name of the service is 'CIRCLE' (Continuing in Recovery Changes Lives Entirely) which has been chosen by recovery focus groups involving service users and people with lived and living experience. CIRCLE will be based at a newly refurbished site on Glasgow Road in Paisley and will act as a central hub with recovery activity delivered across local communities throughout Renfrewshire.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – On 9 March 2020, Renfrewshire Council agreed its budget with a commitment of £2 million to support priorities emerging from the Alcohol and Drugs Commission.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The Commission was established by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership and the report has been endorsed by the Community Planning Partnership Executive Group.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** – none

7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health and Safety** - none
 9. **Procurement** – none
 10. **Risk** – none
 11. **Privacy Impact** – none
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
 13. **Climate Risk** – this report provides a summary of work being undertaken by the Council to respond to the climate emergency.
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