

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING WITH CABINET MEMBER, HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

15 December 2015

Report of the Director of Public Health

EVALUATION OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of the report:

To inform the Cabinet Member of the award of a contract for an evaluation of the Intuitive Recovery substance misuse education programme, for a six month period, to Professor David Best of the Department of Law and Criminology at Sheffield Hallam University.

2. Information and analysis:

On 15 July 2014 the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities approved a series of grants including one for the Intuitive Recovery programme. The aim of the programme is to address the recovery needs of a group of individuals who have been in, primarily (but not exclusively), drug treatment for opiate dependency for a number of years. The philosophy that permeates the programme is to empower the client to assume full responsibility for their actions and develop and demonstrate problem-solving skills. Working alongside existing treatment providers, this programme provides a fresh approach to both challenge and equip individuals to change who, for many reasons, have become “stuck” in the system.

The programme consists of four consecutive half-days facilitated by a skilled trainer, who is himself in recovery, thus providing instant credibility for the client group. Learners undertake both written work and facilitated groupwork to understand their substance misuse, put it into context and learn skills for abstinence in the future. On completion, learners receive an accredited National Open College Network qualification.

In Derbyshire, up to the present date, there have been 104 people commencing the programme and 89 people completing it. This is an excellent level of completion for any such programme, especially given the cohort that has been targeted, are individuals who have been in treatment for over four years.

The feedback from learners has been overwhelmingly positive:

"I have loved sitting this course and I know that I will never, ever use heroin ever again in my life. Thank you very much. It has opened my eyes to what I have not only put myself through but also those close to me."

"Every day this week I have gained knowledge and further willpower. I can no longer be fooled by something I truly understand. Each day I have been excited to get here to learn and I have gained more confidence each day. I am in control and I am not sick or ill. The pathetic excuses I used to commit crime and use are ridiculous. I am so much more educated and practising the skills each day. I have not used all week now and I will reduce off my script and not commit any more offences"

"This course has helped me mentally grasp what has been happening in my head with cravings. I can't believe I have used for 15 years and nobody has ever educated me how and why this happens. This is the single most important bit of education I have ever had."

The course has been so anecdotally successful that we have recently expanded it to target substance misusers subject to Integrated Offender Management (IOM), and long-term alcohol misusers. However, in order to identify whether the programme delivers robust long-term outcomes, it is proposed that a follow-up study is undertaken to evaluate the following:

Recovery outcomes: Evaluating the recovery outcomes of up to 50 participants of the programme, comparing current drug using status to their previous drug using status (hard outcomes), and assessing which areas of functioning and wellbeing have improved

Programme effectiveness outcomes: Identifying the specific changes that the programme has delivered for individuals over and above previous treatment interventions (comparison of programme effectiveness), primarily through qualitative and in-depth interviews with participants

Post-programme individual changes outcomes: Identifying any subsequent changes and improvements that the participants of the programme have made since the initial programme (e.g. with regard to family/relationships, employment, training, hobbies, associates, use of leisure time, substance use, smoking)

Cost outcomes: An economic evaluation to assess return on investment

Written quotes were invited from three local university research departments with experience of evaluating substance misuse interventions. Expressions of interest were received from Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Derby. Whilst both submissions were of high quality, Sheffield Hallam University was the only bidder able

to undertake the required elements within the proposed timescale. Professor David Best of Sheffield Hallam University is a highly respected researcher on substance misuse and recovery and his team has been identified as offering a substantial level of expertise and credibility in this topic area. It is therefore proposed to award the research project to Sheffield Hallam University.

3. Financial considerations:

A six month evaluation including interviews, treatment data matching and monitoring criminal justice outcomes can be provided by Sheffield Hallam at a cost of £15,000. There is sufficient money within the Public Health monies to fund this research, which will inform future use of this intervention in Derbyshire.

4. Other considerations:

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

5. Background papers:

Paper to the Cabinet Member meeting of 15 July 2014

6. Key Decision:

No

7. Call-in:

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report? No

8. Officer's Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member notes the award of a contract for an evaluation of the Intuitive Recovery substance misuse education programme, for a six month period, to Professor David Best of the Department of Law and Criminology at Sheffield Hallam University.

Elaine Michel
Director of Public Health