

# **Social Justice and Regeneration Committee**

## **SJR(2)-11-06(p.1) Annex 5**

### **Responses to follow up questions posed at oral questions following Q2 from Owen John Thomas AM (7 June)**

#### **"Will the Minister make a statement on drug rehabilitation initiatives in South Wales Central" (OAQ0698)**

##### **1. Owen John Thomas AM referred to the crime reduction unit near the Centre of Town.**

South Wales Probation Service is required to deliver the Drug Rehabilitation Requirement Programme for offenders who have a problem with drugs. The Probation Service has contracted with the treatment provider Crime Reduction Initiative to jointly deliver this programme from premises in Cathedral Road. They occupy the ground floor. However, one of Mr Thomas's constituents lives on the upper floor and has expressed concerns to him about issues such as noise, rubbish, smoking in the garden etc.

Because the building has D1 planning consent, a form of health service planning permission, it can be used to deliver this programme. The managers of the programme are committed to a long-term lease with the Landlord and it is not therefore possible to relocate in the short-term.

A meeting has taken place between the constituent, three other residents living close by, Owen John Thomas, a representative of the Probation Service and the manager of Crime Reduction Initiative. The aim was to explain the programme and to try to provide some reassurance in that this intervention is not just to try to stop drug taking offenders from re-offending but to try to help them to actually stop taking drugs altogether. Approximately 50 clients attend the premises throughout the day in order to comply with the conditions of their court order. The Manager of the Programme has agreed to work closely with the resident on the upper floor to address her concerns. Already some remedial measures have been taken. A follow up meeting may take place in several months time if requested.

Owen John Thomas AM has written to me since oral questions. I have responded and also written to the Chief Probation Officer for Wales to ask him if there is anything that can be done.

##### **2. Christine Chapman AM raised the issue of funding concerns over the continuation of the probation partnership service.**

Christine Chapman also wrote to me about this matter last month and I have responded. She had concerns relating to South Wales Probation Service funding for 2006-07 and referred to a recent

newsletter from TEDS, Drugaid and WGCADA which was circulated in April. These organisations provide substance misuse counselling services for the Probation Service and they were concerned that their funding may be withdrawn.

The South Wales Regional Team met with the Chief Probation Officer for South Wales last month and he agreed to extend funding until the end of September 2006 to allow time to resolve the funding problem. On 14<sup>th</sup> June officials met again with the Chief Probation Officer. This time representatives of the 7 CSPs also attended. I am pleased to say this issue has been resolved for the current year and the funding for the agencies underwritten. The meeting also agreed a process for moving to greater co-ordination in the planning and commissioning of services for future years.

### **3. David Melding AM and Jenny Randerson AM raised the issue of waiting times in Cardiff**

Jenny Randerson AM has already written to me on this issue and a response was sent out on the same day as these questions were taken.

The main problem relates to difficulties at the Cardiff Community Addictions Unit. Cardiff Community Safety Partnership has prepared a plan to resolve the deficits in the substitute prescribing budget which was preventing treatment being delivered to new patients of the Cardiff Community Addictions Unit (CAU). The aim of the plan is to build treatment capacity in the CAU and GP Shared Care services. The plan is supported by additional resources of £380,939 each year in 2005/6 and 2006/7 from the Home Office Drug Testing on Charge Capacity Building funding stream. Last year I also made available a one-off payment of £53,000 to help with the costs of prescribing methadone and subutex. This is a total of £ 814,878 over the two years which is in addition to the CSP's allocation of funding from the Substance Misuse Action Fund. The new system has been working well with average waiting times being reduced from 10 months to 4 months and the number prescribed methadone rising from 143 to 264.

Though these actions help resolve this particular problem, I want to continue to see waiting times reduced further across the whole of Wales. We are about to begin a national audit of waiting times which includes exploring how referrals are managed. It is not therefore appropriate for me to comment at this stage on differences between areas.