

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

SUBSTANCE MISUSE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Purpose

The Committee is asked to provide a response to the consultation on the draft circular "SUBSTANCE MISUSE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE".

Summary

This paper covers:

- Background information;
- why a new circular is necessary;
- the content of the draft circular;
- the main differences between "Circular 54/95 - Drug Misuse: Prevention and Schools" and the new draft circular;
- details of the consultation process; and,
- questions that the committee might wish to consider when responding to the draft circular.

Timing

A consultation on the draft circular was launched on 29 October. The consultation will end on 28 December. The Committee's discussion of it is part of this process.

Background

Welsh Office Circular 54/95 – "Drug Misuse: Prevention and Schools" currently provides guidance to schools on teaching children and young people about the dangers of substance misuse. It also offers advice on how to deal with such incidents. Since it was issued in October 1995, no further specific guidance on substance misuse in schools has been issued in Wales.

Consideration

Why have a new circular?

A major drawback with Circular 54/95 is that its references, addresses and contacts needed to be updated; it does not reflect current good practice guidance; and, very importantly, its recasting provides an ideal opportunity to fundamentally review this high profile area of work.

Content of the draft circular

The draft circular contains the following sections:

- the nature and extent of the problem of substance misuse among children and young people;
- developing an effective substance misuse policy;
- dealing with incidents involving substance misuse;
- guidance on good practice in educating children and young people about the dangers of substance misuse; and,
- additional information.

The draft circular differs from "Circular 54/95 - Drug Misuse: Prevention and Schools" in a number of respects. The most significant differences are that:

- It is not solely aimed at schools, but at all organisations providing educational opportunities to young people.
- It contains guidance about the wide spectrum of substances misused in Wales, including tobacco, alcohol, solvents, prescription and over the counter drugs, as well as illegal drugs.
- It draws on the latest evidence for good practice, produced by government departments in England and Scotland and by independent organisations, such as DrugScope.
- It draws from National Assembly for Wales documents, including "Extending Entitlement", "Pupil Support and Social Inclusion" and "Youth Work Curriculum".
- It reflects current organisational structures within the National Assembly for Wales, Local Government and the National Health Service.
- It reflects the substance misuse partnership structure in Wales, namely, Drug and Alcohol Action Teams and Local Action Teams.

Details of the consultation process

Wide consultation on the draft circular commenced on 29 October. Among its recipients are a representative cross section of schools; further and higher education institutions; ELWa; all LEAs; ADSS; Drug and Alcohol Action Teams; Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse; all Welsh

Police forces; Wales Youth Agency; the WCVA and voluntary organisations involved with substance misuse; the Children's Commissioner; Childline; and, Health Promoting Schools Network. In addition, a workshop is planned to obtain the views of young people themselves.

The consultation period will end on 28 December. Careful consideration will be given to all responses received and the draft circular will be amended appropriately. The revised Circular is expected to be launched in Spring 2002.

Issues

The Committee is invited to provide its comments on any aspects of the draft circular. We would be particularly interested in your views on:

- any additional information that should be included in it;
- whether any particular elements of it should be specifically targeted at particular organisations or groups;
- whether it should be issued in a particular format (eg) single document, loose leaf binders, etc; and
- what practical measures should be adopted to heighten its profile following publication.

Compliance

Section 10 of Education Act 1996 enables the Assembly to promote the education of the people of Wales. Functions under this Act have been delegated to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. There are no issues of regularity or propriety.

Printing and distribution costs for both the consultation draft circular and the final version of the Circular will be found from within Pupil Support Division's Publicity Budget and are expected to amount to £15,500.

Cross-Cutting Themes

To ensure that the draft Circular's objectives of providing a comprehensive cross cutting approach to the future delivery of this key policy area is fulfilled, all relevant agencies and bodies are being consulted. This clearly includes those involved with equality of opportunity.

Conclusion

The Education and Lifelong Committee are invited to provide their comments on the attached draft circular.

Contact Point

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