

Cross-Party Group on Substance Misuse and Addiction

ANNUAL REPORT Sept 2021 – Sept 2022

MEMBERSHIP

Chair: Peredur Owen Griffiths MS

Jayne Bryant MS

Jane Dodds MS

John Griffiths MS

Altaf Hussain MS

Secretariat:

Crispin Watkins (Executive PA to the CEO and Board of Kaleidoscope, Campaigns & Communications Officer) on behalf of the Kaleidoscope Project

External Members:

The CPG circulation list currently numbers 230 invitees from across Wales' Drug and Alcohol Services from the 3rd Sector, NHS Drug and Alcohol Services, Service Area Planning Board Commissioners and Representatives, Local Councils, His Majesty's Prison and Parole Services (HMPPS), Police and Crime Commissioners, Police Services, Homelessness, Housing, Childrens and Woman's Charities, Mental Health and Recovery Services, and Peer Workers.

MEETINGS

The Group met three times during 2022:

24th January 2022 – Peredur Owen Griffiths MS was elected Chair. Kaleidoscope were elected to provide Secretariat services. The initial meeting was intended to hear the voices of those with lived experience of substance use, addiction, and the impacts thereof on individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Speakers and topics:

Anyone's Child campaigner Pat Hudson shared her own personal experience of how current drug policy failed her son and why she is advocating for legal regulation.

Terry, a Chronic Alcoholic, shared how he completely turned his life around after a Prison Officer pointed him towards Alcoholics Anonymous nearly 27 years ago.

Outreach worker and campaigner Elwyn 'Tommy' Thomas shared his experiences of the criminal justice system, and how co-producing substance use services with those with lived experience has the power to transform lives.

7th June 2022

The second meeting focussed on the impact of Westminster's punitive criminal-justice based approach to substance use, and the positive experiences of a health-based approach focussed on harm reduction and compassion.

Speakers and topics:

Cullan Mais, Podcast host of The Central Club: A Voice through Adversity, shared his story as a former Heroin and Crack user who 'lived a life of recklessness'. He became clean in 2020 with the support of Recovery Cymru and Kaleidoscope and his goal became to eradicate stigma, and show no matter how bad your problems there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Jason Kew, Former Chief Inspector with Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit, lead for Drugs and Harm Reduction, Head of innovative practice at the Centre for Justice Innovation spoke on how a punitive approach to substance use doesn't work. Jason spoke about his own journey from being an arrest-focussed 'Robocop', to understanding through first-hand experience working under-cover living on the streets, the lives and trauma of people who use drugs.

Dafydd Llywelyn is Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys and spoke on how the existing legislative framework is outdated and needs a refresh and review. The UK drug strategy is an opportunity to make ground-breaking strides but the opportunity is not being taken in Westminster. He also spoke on the value of a diversion-based approach and the acceptance that from a cultural-perspective things need to change within the Police force.

3rd October 2022

The third meeting of the Cross Party Group was attended by special guest Lynne Neagle, MS, Deputy Health Minister with responsibility for Mental Health and Wellbeing. The meeting focussed on the role of co-production in the creation of drug and alcohol services.

Speakers and topics:

Rondine Molinaro, Head of the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) spoke on 20 years of co-production in Gwent, spoke of her own experiences of homeless and substance use and her journey to become Head of GDAS. Her presentation focussed on highlighting the key enablers of success in co-production of services: Access, Trust, Inclusion, Investment, funding & resources, Culture Change amongst staff, Recognition of Service Users, Inspiration, Eliminating Stigma.

George Charlton is a trainer and consultant in drug and alcohol awareness and harm prevention programs and asked 'what do you do with people who have lost their souls? You show them love'. He spoke openly about his own experience of being sexually, mentally and physically abused as a

child and turning to substance use to manage the trauma. He also spoke extensively about co production in Wales, with the world's first nationwide Peer to Peer Naloxone programme and other peer-led harm reduction approaches such as dry blood spot testing, wound care, contraception and sexual health programmes.

Lynne Neagle, MS, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing spoke saying 'it is really important for me to hear that [account of the trauma underlying substance use]'. She noted that since coming into post she's been struck by the commitment from people in the sector, especially Peers. Lynne noted the different approach taken in Wales, focussed on Harm Reduction, backed by protected funding. Lynne stated 'One death is too many; we need to get underneath the headline numbers on drug related deaths and understand how to act'. Lynne stated a new substance misuse plan for Wales is to be developed and this will include input from Services and be Co Produced with Service Users.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

There was no income, funds held, or expenditure over the period covered in this annual report.

Note: A motion to change the name of the CPG was proposed at the end of 2022, and unanimously approved at the AGM in January of 2023. The CPG during 2023 will be know as 'The Senedd Cross Party Group on Substance Use and Addiction'.

Crispin Watkins

Secretary, Cross Party Group on Substance Misuse and Addiction,

January 2023