

# Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

**SJR 02-05 (P.2)**

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<b>Venue:</b>	National Assembly for Wales
<b>Title:</b>	Paper submitted from Martin Riley, Substance Misuse Officer, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Martin Riley is the Strategic Development Officer for Neath Port Talbot Social Services that has the job of developing services for those both seeking help in reducing their substance misuse as well as support to those that are effected by the substance misuses.

Over the past three years we are very pleased to see the increase in the budget that the Assembly has made available under the Substance Misuse Treatment Fund for the development of services. We are also pleased with the way the Assembly is projecting an indicative budget for at least two years ahead which enables us to plan and look to the future

Having looked at the indicative figures for the financial year 2006-07 however, this will not enable any growth in services as this funding will in our case only cover inflation rises in the money we presently give agencies to deliver substance misuse services.

All indications are that substance misuse will not decrease, and that society will, for the foreseeable future, be tasked with the job of managing this problem and helping those that are affected by their misuse to minimise the harm to themselves and to those around them. In Neath and Port Talbot we are fortunate to have an agency, West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, that offers a spectrum from harm minimisation to abstinence to its clients. A treatment method that is not available across all of Wales

For those that are opiate users in the Neath Port Talbot area there is a programme that offers an alternative, supervised methadone or subutex. This programme is providing effective support but is reaching its maximum capacity in relation to the resources available. New monies that are being offered via Through Care and Aftercare is being offered with the proviso that it will only pick up the prescribing costs for a maximum of six months. At present we do not have a waiting list for the supervised scheme but I am aware that it is reaching capacity and when the new scheme comes into place it will put

pressure on the present supervised methadone scheme, which will probably see a waiting list develop. To alleviate this we need to see an increase in the medicine-dispensing budget within secondary care

Whilst we have concentrated on opiates we must not forget this is just one of the drugs that people present with for treatment. By far the main drug is alcohol. We should not forget the harm that this drug causes and the damage that it does. It is the drug most used by those that are presenting to our domestic violence worker

In Neath and Port Talbot we have seen an increase in people presenting for treatment, using stimulants such as cocaine crack or amphetamine

Neath and Port Talbot has access to one inpatient bed that is on an acute mental health unit. This is not ideal particularly for certain groups, young and older people and people with physical health needs

One of the main partners in the delivery of substance misuse services in Neath Port Talbot area is within the voluntary sector West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. They work in partnership to support most clients that are seen by their general practitioner or the community drug and alcohol team. Because of their flexibility and professionalism they play a pivotal and key role in not only the delivery of services in Neath and Port Talbot but also in South Wales

In Neath and Port Talbot we have developed joint support and treatment basis, with the voluntary sector and the statutory sector joint. This will be an ongoing process

These have been developed by the voluntary sector as they have been successful in securing capital monies from both the lottery and the Home Office and have purchased and refurbished two delivery points that are fit for purpose with group rooms, small counselling rooms with disabled access

These premises also offer accommodation to partner agencies either permanently or as required. This has been done to ensure a positive message is given to the staff, service users, other professionals and the general community that services to this client group are delivered from buildings that show respect for the clients and are suitable for the myriad of activities that the voluntary sector offer.

We welcome the Assembly's initiative in making available capital monies over the next three years and we would like to invite any Members of this Committee to come and see what we have achieved in Neath and Port Talbot.

The local authority and all the partners in Neath and Port Talbot believe that our years of hard work and co-operation are paying dividends, and we are proud to see this as good practice and a blue print for others.

Substance misuse crosses all social divisions and all ages. We are seeing in Neath and Port Talbot an increase in the number of older people that are coming forward to seek help for their substance misuse.

Other effective initiatives developed locally are in addition a domestic violence worker and a family worker. Both posts are much needed. The number of women coming forward and seeking help from the domestic violence worker is increasing with some coming before they have ever reported their abuse to the police

In Neath Port Talbot we have also developed the Substance Misuse Assessment Referral Team with additional health money. This has enabled us to develop a highly responsive NHS Trust assessment team that will see all referrals within five days. A qualified psychiatric nurse undertakes assessments and individuals are directed to the appropriate service. This has resulted in service users getting access to the appropriate service in a timely manner.

On looking to the future, we have made great strides in the services that we have developed by an openness to work together for the best service for the client. We would ask the Assembly to look to continue to increase the expenditure in this area as we wish to attract and maintain a dedicated workforce that are delivering services to a marginalised group. To regenerate any area we need investment in housing, education and infrastructure etc but this alone will not be enough we need investment in services that support people at a time of need and services that encourage and show them the way to dealing with their substance abuse. In Neath and Port Talbot due to joint working we are on the path to achieving these goals.

Martin Riley

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