

# Key questions for discussion by local drug partnerships

From the Audit Commission report *Drug Misuse 2004: Reducing the local impact*, November 2004

The Audit Commission national report *Drug Misuse 2004* identified improvements in the local response to problem drug use since the earlier report *Changing Habits (2002)*, but also challenges for local partnerships and national agencies.

This extract (Appendix 5 to the report) contains questions that drug action teams and community safety partnerships can use with their local stakeholders to assess local progress. Most questions are adaptable to cover alcohol misuse as well if appropriate.

There are three sets of questions:

- Set A for senior managers (and elected or appointed members) – not just those directly involved with the partnership, but in leadership of all agencies.
- Set B for commissioners - not just the DAT co-ordinator and joint commissioning manager, but those commissioning related services for example, for children, or housing support.
- Set C for staff in relevant services - both drug treatment and the general services that encounter users and carers at a point of need.

The Audit Commission website [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) contains the full report and reference to associated resources, including a wall chart.

## Key questions for senior managers

- A1 Do you know what most concerns local people about drug misuse and how well they think you are addressing this?
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- A2 Does the public and your staff understand why and how local services are helping problem drug users?
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- A3 Are local mainstream services fulfilling their role in preventing drug misuse and helping drug users and their carers effectively?
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- A4 If you run drug treatment services, do they provide value for money within the overall pattern of local treatment?
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- A5 Is it getting easier for young people to get help to avoid or recover from substance misuse? And for children of drug users to get the help that they need?
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- A6 Do other partners speak highly of your organisation's contribution to reducing drug misuse?
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- A7 Are you funding your drugs strategy through mainstream budgets? Or are you reliant on short-term funds?
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- A8 Does your management team and governing body know how well the local drug partnership is performing and what your organisation should do to improve performance?
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- A9 Does the work of the local drug partnership knit well with that of other local partnerships?
- A10 Are you working constructively with regulators to identify ways to further reduce the local impact of problem drug use?
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# Key questions for people who commission services for problem drug users and their carers

- B1 Do you know if the impact of problem drug use on local communities is changing? How much more will you know this time next year?
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- B2 Are you making best use of national sources of expertise, evidence of what works, and benchmarking with other partnerships?
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- B3 Are the actions explicit within local plans for children and young people to prevent problem drug use and to provide interventions for those who need it?
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- B4 Can you point to decisions you have made that drug users and carers have influenced? Would they give the same answer?
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- B5 Are you confident that the services you commission meet the needs of minority groups, the most vulnerable drug users, and their carers?
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- B6 Are the reasons soundly evidenced to justify the split of spending between different aspects of adult treatment in your treatment plan/substance misuse action plan?
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- B7 Do you have a fair and transparent way of enabling all service providers to contribute to the planning process?
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- B8 Will sufficient services be in place to give drug users now starting a recovery journey the support they need right to the end of it?
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- B9 Are you clear to whom you are accountable for achieving performance targets, and are they giving you the right support and challenge?
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- B10 How do you hold partner agencies accountable for actions they have agreed?
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# Key questions for managers to ask people who work with problem drug users and their carers

## In mainstream services

- C1 How well are you able to direct drug users or their carers to local sources of help?
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- C2 When your work involves a drug user in treatment or their carer, are you clear who else is involved and what you need to do to help make treatment effective?
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- C3 Are drug users and their carers treated by your service with the same courtesy and respect as other members of the general public?
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## In services for young people

- C4 Are you clear about what part your organisation plays in preventing drug misuse by young people?
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- C5 Does the information given by all local agencies to young people give them a clear and consistent message about drug misuse?
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- C6 Can you tell when a young person needs more specialist help with the consequences of their own or a parent's drug use and do you know how to ensure that they get it?
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## In drug treatment services

- C7 How well do you keep up to date in your field and develop your skills to meet the changing expectations of both your service and service users?
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- C8 How do you know whether users or carers, including those from ethnic minority communities, recommend your service to others?
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- C9 How much of your work forms part of a pathway of integrated care that you understand and can influence?
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- C10 How do you know whether your service is producing better outcomes for those who use it, including those with the most complex needs, than it was a year ago? How much better will it be next year?
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