# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Consultation on the Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022** |
| **DATE** | **01 July 2019** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething AM, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Tackling substance misuse is a priority for the Welsh Government and an area that we must continue to focus upon if we are to meet our ambitions in *“A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care*” as this is a major health issue which affects individuals, families and communities. Today I am launching the consultation on our “*Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022”*, which sets out our priority areas for substance misuse for this period. I believe the priority areas we have set out in this plan will help achieve our ambition of reducing the harms associated with substance misuse.

Following a detailed and comprehensive period of pre-consultation with our partners, including service users, the plan sets out a number of priority areas which we are committed to delivering upon over the next 3 years. The views gathered as part of this exercise, together with the evaluation of the Welsh Government’s previous 10-year strategy and a recent HIW report on substance misuse services, have all shaped the content of this latest delivery plan. The plan highlights that responding to co-occurring mental health problems which are common in substance misuse will be an important area on which to focus along with ensuring stronger partnership working with housing and homelessness services to further support those with substance misuse issues who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Support for Prisoners is another area where we recognise further work is needed, with our aim being that all prisons in Wales have a coordinated, transparent and consistent service for those with substance misuse problems. Providing further support for families and carers of people who misuse substances will also be key, as will improving access to services and ensuring people get the support and treatment when they need it. I also recognise the need to tackle dependence on prescription only medicines (POM) and over the counter medicines (OTC) and we will, of course, need to ensure that appropriate and responsive alcohol misuse services are in place before the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 is implemented in early 2020.

This plan builds on the good progress made during the lifetime of the previous Welsh Government 2008-18 substance misuse strategy, as evidenced by the evaluation. The evaluation acknowledged, for example, that there has been good evidence of improvement in sustained service delivery in this area. For example, in 2017/18 90.9% of people starting treatment were seen within 20 working days, compared to 75% in 2011/12.

A lot has been achieved against a challenging backdrop of tight resources and the ever changing nature of substance misuse but the delivery plan reflects the fact that more needs to be done particularly if we are to reduce both drug and alcohol deaths. I am therefore fully committed to continuing to support this agenda and our overall aim in this plan continues to be to ensure that people in Wales are aware of the dangers and the impact of substance misuse and know where they can seek information, help and support if they need it.

The Welsh Government’s continued commitment to tackling substance misuse can be demonstrated through the additional funding I provided in this financial year to support substance misuse services. An extra £2.4m funding has been made available in 2019/20 for the seven Area Planning Boards who are responsible for commissioning local, front line services. This is an increase in funding of over 10% and means we are able to support our partners with extra money to meet future challenges, including those we have highlighted as part of the new delivery plan. This increased investment takes our annual funding for substance misuse to almost £53m which underlines this government’s commitment to supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Tackling the causes and effects of substance misuse requires commitment from across government and our partners delivering frontline services to ensure we reach and support everyone who is in need so that they get the right level of support, at the right time and in the right place. This is a challenging and complex agenda and this plan demonstrates that we will continue to work closely with partners at a national and local level to ensure we are taking a preventative, integrated and long-term approach to improve outcomes for individuals and families across Wales.

I look forward to considering the responses to the consultation.

The consultation can be viewed via the following link:

<https://gov.wales/substance-misuse-delivery-plan-2019-2022>