# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022** |
| **DATE**  | **23rd October 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*”. This is a major health issue which affects individuals, families and communities and today I am pleased to launch the final version of the “*Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022”*.

The new delivery plan has been informed by a detailed and comprehensive period of pre-engagement and then formal consultation with our partners, including service users. It 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 the pre-engagement events and the consultation process, 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 plan.

There were eighty five responses to the formal consultation exercise held during July and August. It is pleasing to see that 90% of respondents agreed or partly agreed that treating substance misuse as a health and social care issue with a strong emphasis placed on harm reduction in the Plan is the right approach. Also, 88% of respondents either agreed or partly agreed that the key priorities set out in the plan were the right ones.

The responses to the consultation also identified some key additional areas which needed to be strengthened further and these have been considered and reflected in the final Plan.

For example, there was a focus on the need for a precise definition of what was meant by ‘harm reduction’ and the importance of investing in prevention approaches was also a recurring theme in all aspects of the consultation process. It was felt that there needed to be a stronger emphasis on children and young people which has also been reflected through additional actions in the plan. There were a range of issues raised around the links with GPs, particularly around stigmatisation when attending a GP appointment, availability of training for GPs on substance misuse and also the need to ensure there are care pathways between primary care and substance misuse services. The ageing population of drug users was an issue that was also raised throughout in relation to both ensuring treatment is targeted and suits needs as well as ensuring general physical health is taken into account. Finally, respondents focused on the difficulties in accessing mental health services when they have a substance misuse problem. It was recognised that this is a complex group of individuals and an area where we need to make further progress. We have already made extra resources available to target this group. Area Planning Boards were asked to submit proposals for projects to support individuals where there were co-occurring substance misuse and mental health issues, housing needs and bids were encouraged to link with Housing First pilots. The outcome of these bids will be announced soon but will represent a further investment which will support our actions in both this plan and the *‘Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022’* which will be published shortly.

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 independent evaluation published in April 2018. The evaluation acknowledged, for example, that there has been good evidence of improvement in sustained service delivery in this area. For example, in 2018/19 91.5% of people starting treatment were seen within 20 working days, compared to 73% in 2009/10.

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 related 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 am also publishing today the Substance Misuse Annual Report and Forward Look 2019.

The Delivery Plan can be viewed via the following link:

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

The Substance Misuse Annual Report and Forward Look 2019 can be viewed via the following link:

[https://gov.wales/substance-misuse-annual-report-and-forward-look-2019](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fsubstance-misuse-annual-report-and-forward-look-2019&data=02%7C01%7CJulia.Huish%40gov.wales%7Cd74bf9a3b4e64f41ba6308d751531f97%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637067289764192426&sdata=%2B2iRm%2Bxdxr8LqCVVlP3eCfPLIgVh5T1RfaeFfLVNKPY%3D&reserved=0)