

# The 2008 drug strategy: one year on

HM Government

---

## A briefing paper from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

April 2009

### 1. Introduction

In April 2009, HM Government launched *The 2008 drug strategy: one year on*<sup>1</sup>. The publication charts progress since the original drug strategy<sup>2</sup> was published in February 2008 and offers examples of its impact on individuals, families and communities. It also sets out what Government's next priorities will be in this area.

This briefing paper summarises *The 2008 drug strategy: one year on*, but first highlights potential issues for the voluntary and community youth sector arising from the publication.

### 2. Potential issues for the voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS)

*The 2008 drug strategy: one year on* has a strong emphasis on young people, families and communities. As many VCYS organisations deal with young people who may be exposed to drugs, it is important that the sector is aware of continued Government priorities for progress in this area. Furthermore, the VCYS can play a key role in communicating with young people and families and engaging with local communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas and needs to be part of joined up working.

---

<sup>1</sup> HM Government (2009) *The 2008 drug strategy: one year on* is available via: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/drug-strategy-2008-one-year-on?view=Standard&pubID=630996>

<sup>2</sup> HM Government (2008) *Drugs: protecting families and communities – 2008-2018* is available via: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drug-strategy/overview/?view=Standard>

### 3. *The 2008 drug strategy: one year on summary*

This section provides a summary of *The 2008 drug strategy: one year on*, highlighting key, relevant points for the VCYS.

#### **Enforcing the law and protecting communities**

The strategy states that in the last year Government has seized more of the cash and assets that dealers and other criminals have gained through their criminal activity, to be reinvested in crime reduction and community projects. One beneficiary was the Tall Ships Youth Trust<sup>3</sup>.

Government has continued to roll out the Street Level Up approach to enforcement which is now operating in seven police force areas bringing together the police and other agencies to build a comprehensive picture of local drug markets and supply networks.

Other developments have included the reclassification of Cannabis from a Class C to a Class B drug and penalties have been strengthened for repeated offences of cannabis possession, or where cannabis is smoked in a public place or near young people.

Neighbourhood Policing teams have been put in place in every area of England and Wales with the aim of enabling police to respond more directly to any issues of concern identified by the community.

The strategy sets out Government's future priorities around enforcing the law and protecting communities:

- support Neighbourhood Policing teams to engage communities more effectively and to form better links with local partners so that issues of concern to the community can be better and more rapidly addressed;
- continue to make improvements to the quality of prison-based drug treatment, to support for offenders being resettled into the community and to design new ways to further restrict the supply of drugs within prisons; and
- the number of areas that are able to drug test offenders on arrest will be extended. From April 2009, some 174 police custody suites will offer drug testing under the Drug Interventions Programme.

#### **Preventing harm to young people and families**

The strategy states that in the last year Government has piloted Family Intervention Projects in ten areas. These provide intensive support for families affected by issues such as substance misuse or domestic violence. Links between these projects and drug treatment providers are being strengthened to allow up to 20,000 families to access support.

Government has established a national network linking services that focus on safeguarding children and supporting families and provides information, resources and support for all those working with children, young people and families where there is a substance misuse problem.

The number of Positive Futures<sup>4</sup> projects has increased. Positive Futures targets young people in the most disadvantaged areas and uses sports and arts-based activities to engage them and give them the confidence to take control of their lives. It also provides pathways into education, training and employment and informs young people about the dangers of substance misuse and crime. Nearly 58,000 young people took part in Positive Futures 2007/08 and more than 15,000 qualifications and other positive outcomes were recorded as a result of young people's involvement in the programme. One particular example of Tommy's experience of the Positive Futures Penzance programme is given.

---

<sup>3</sup> Further information on the Tall Ships Youth Trust is available via: <http://www.tallships.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Further information on Positive Futures is available via: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/young-people/positive-futures/>

Two successful FRANK<sup>5</sup> campaigns have been launched on cocaine and cannabis.

The strategy sets out Government's future priorities around preventing harm to young people and families:

- expand Government's provision of services for families at risk to prevent problems from developing and escalating through Family Intervention Projects;
- in the coming year we will introduce a Youth Rehabilitation Order which will allow the courts to require young offenders to obtain treatment and support as a condition of their order;
- encourage the provision of more family-friendly services so that parents can get the treatment and support they need and families can be helped to stay together. Parents with drug problems are now being prioritised in local treatment plans; and
- ensure that every young person receives good quality drug education. Government will be consulting this year on proposals to make Personal, Social and Health Education statutory for all schools.

### **Improving drug treatment and helping people to reintegrate into society**

The strategy highlights that in the last year Government has helped increasing numbers of people to access treatment and improved the effectiveness of the treatment: more people are completing their course of treatment or staying in treatment long enough to get real benefit from it.

The planning and provision of services has been further joined up so that Jobcentre Plus offices, local authorities and primary care trusts work together. Government has provided comprehensive guidance to all service providers so that there is clear information about which approaches to treatment are most effective.

The strategy sets out Government's future priorities in improving drug treatment and helping people to reintegrate into society focus on recovery and reintegration:

- continue to drive improvements in the co-ordination of services to help drug users to re-establish their lives and to reintegrate into society. Government is supporting pilot programmes throughout the country that will look at how this can be achieved, whether through changes to the commissioning of services or the innovative use of budgets; and
- continue to provide treatment that prevents harm to the individual and to the community, with an overall aim of helping them to overcome their dependency.

### **Communications and community engagement**

The strategy states that in the last year Government has provided young people and their parents and carers with information about drugs so that they can make informed decisions, e.g. through the FRANK campaign. Research found that 89% of young people recognised the campaign and it achieved a 12% increase in the number of 11 to 21 year olds who agreed it was likely that cannabis could damage the mind of someone using it. In 2008 the FRANK helpline received 348,355 calls, an average of 954 every day, and has more than 5 million visits to the FRANK website.

Government has worked closely with the Colombian government on the Shared Responsibility campaign<sup>6</sup> and has supported the police and other partners to develop local communication campaigns. The third annual Tackling Drugs Changing Lives Awards event has also been held which recognised, rewarded and celebrated the work being done by drug teams and workers across the country.

---

<sup>5</sup> Further information on FRANK is available via: <http://www.talktofrank.com/>

<sup>6</sup> Further information on the Shared Responsibility campaign is available via: <http://www.sharedresponsibility.gov.co/en/>

The strategy sets out Government's future priorities in this area:

- target efforts on communities, putting in place police teams to listen to and act on their problems and letting people know what is being done to reduce drug use and to make their communities safer; and
- develop communications for parents by looking into what works and what parents need.

For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Policy Officer, Hannah Dobbin, email [hannah@ncvys.org.uk](mailto:hannah@ncvys.org.uk) or on 020 7278 1041.