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15 January 2003

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**Response to the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy Consultation Document on behalf of Knowsley Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the above document.

The members of Knowsley DAAT welcome the development of the national strategy and feel it will build upon the excellent local work already underway in Knowsley as outlined in our Young Person's Substance Misuse Plan.

The specific comments we wish to make are as follows.

- Whilst children and young people are covered in the section entitled 'The Implication for Vulnerable Groups', it is felt that the importance of impacting on the drinking behaviour of young people is so great that this population group warrants a separate section which should precede both Health and Crime & Disorder.
- It would be helpful if the National Strategy gave direction on where leadership for local implementation of the strategy should come. Within Knowsley, alcohol, as part of the DAAT agenda, works well. However its inclusion has been via a 'stepped' approach ie young people substance misuse plan, treatment, strategic development. Unless a stepped approach is taken and a culture of partnership working along with comprehensive co-ordination exists, there is a risk that Alcohol will be perceived to be an 'add on' to an already unwieldy agenda.

Borrowing from experience of the strategy development in Scotland, it would be helpful to have guidance as to priority areas for action. Young people and binge drinking would appear to be good areas on which to start.

- 39. There may be efficiency and service provision benefits in providing joined-up services for people who are vulnerable due to either drugs, alcohol or mental health needs.

In Knowsley we are currently developing services around a joint pooled budget for young people's substance misuse services, as well as being one of 25 national pilot schemes to develop this initiative. Joint protocols, information sharing and consistent care management would be deemed appropriate in ensuring that a full range of care options is carried out for each individual. It is also noteworthy that the commissioner for the DAAT for drugs and alcohol services is also the commissioner for mental health services. This helps support areas of work around dual diagnosis and ensures that both agendas are being covered within each specific theme.

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- 49. There is a tendency to compare alcohol initiatives with those for illegal drugs. However, there are lessons to be learned from Smoking Prevention and Cessation initiatives. Knowsley PCT, in partnership with the voluntary sector, has produced resources for primary and secondary school children to inform them of the risks of smoking. The resources and associated service have attracted a great deal of national attention. An event to share good practice from the scheme is due to be held in Knowsley on 29 January 2003. The smoking prevention resources could be amended to provide a similar message regarding alcohol. Funding is presently being sought locally to undertake this work.
- 60. Knowsley DAAT feels that further consideration should be given to the wording of point 60. The use of 'alcohol as a method of reducing stress and tension and of facilitating networking in the workplace' must be seen with extreme caution and has the potential to be misconstrued within a National Strategy.

In summary the DAAT, along with partner agencies within the PCT and Public Health, would very much support the development of a strategy for alcohol. Already we are underway in putting some of these pieces in place locally under both our young people's plan, and our support for adult services. Obviously extra funding which may come along with a new strategy would be exceptionally useful, as current no designate funding is given to this wide-ranging service. Appropriate experiences could be sought in light of the development and revision of the drug strategy regarding performance indicators, benchmarking and other target and management mechanisms.

Response from Liz Gaulton, Public Health Specialist, Knowsley PCT  
and  
Cathy Young, Knowsley DAAT Co-ordinator

on behalf of Knowsley DAAT.