

Minutes of the South Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Public Meeting

Ten Square Hotel, Belfast
Tuesday, 7th March, 2017

Political Members

Councillor Geraldine McAteer (Chair)
Councillor Jeffrey Dudgeon

Independent Members

Aleksandra Lojek-Magdziarz (VC)

Designated Organisations

Superintendent Robert Murdie, PSNI
Christine Hunter, PBNI
Yvonne McKnight, H&SCT

Staff Present

Suzanne Gowling, Safer City Coordinator
Rachel Fulton, Partnership Support Officer

Apologies

Aidan Hughes
Anita Duff, EA
SC Michael Roberts, NIFRS

1. Welcome from the South Belfast DPCSP Chair

- i. The Chair welcomed Members, key speakers and members of the public to the South Belfast DPCSP Public Meeting on Drugs. She advised that 2 presentations would be delivered, followed by the opportunity to ask questions about any other matter of concern.

2. PHA Presentation “ Addressing Drugs and Alcohol Together”

- i. James Scott provided the group with a presentation advising on key connection services, regional campaigns and drug and alcohol statistics throughout Northern Ireland.
- ii. He also provided information on the current issues in relation to drugs, addressing items such as what is dealing, poly-drug misuse and online purchasing.
- iii. Mr Scott advised of the RAPID initiative that had been rebranded and launched regionally, stating that currently 15 bins were operational across NI. Between January and October 2016, 7,650 drug items were binned in Belfast.
- iv. He also provided information on signposting to services, stating the importance of knowing referral pathways for easier transition in to the right service to match the right need.
- v. James Scott thanked the partnership for the opportunity to present and advised that signposting leaflets were available for members of the public to take.

3. PSNI Drugs Presentation

- i. Superintendent Robert Murdie provided the group with information on the current position for Belfast advising that from the 1 April 2015 to 25 January 2016; 4,426 drugs offences had been recorded.
- ii. He advised that the PSNI continues to focus tremendous investigative efforts on targeting drugs offences and supply both at the street level and also at an organised crime level and as a result of this a clearance rate of 86.8% had been achieved during this period.
- iii. Superintendent Murdie then provided details on main drug types, how they are smuggled into Northern Ireland and the emerging issues in relation to new psychoactive substances.
- iv. He then advised on Operation Torus- stating that it is delivered on two or three occasions per year, with an aim to tackle street level drug dealing through a coordinated service wide intelligence led approach of enforcement, engagement and education.
- v. Superintendent Murdie advised those in attendance to remain vigilant with regards to drug dealing/taking and to report any kind of suspicious behavior.

4. Questions

- vi. A member of the public highlighted their concerns at hearing reports regarding more than 60 people collapsing in the city centre due to the effects of drugs/or alcohol. What are police doing to combat this?
- vii. James Scott advised that the PSNI or any member of the public who is nearby when the incident occurs are usually classed as “first responders” and can only give limited aid. Where a person has collapsed, an ambulance should be called for. Research from Belfast Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team (BDACT) have found that homeless people are most at risk and that, in regards to members of the public collapsing, this was due to the person mixing substances. Services such as BDACT are designed to help people with long term, chronic problems. BDACT also found that users did not wish to seek support from hospitals.
- viii. Another member of the public questioned, if police are aware of a venue, such as a nightclub where drug consumption happens, will the venue be policed regularly?
- ix. Superintendent Murdie advised that PSNI are aware of 3 nightclubs in Belfast currently being investigated for drug consumption on the premises. The venue will be searched and a drugs dog was used 2 weeks ago to assist with this. He stated that vigilance is key and where necessary, PSNI will make follow up visits to the venues under investigation. In addition James Scott informed the audience that if an oil based substance is used on a washroom worktop it will counter the ingredients in some drugs and make them unusable which is currently be done more frequently.

- x. A member of the public asked if they encounter people who are high or under the influence, what should they do?
- xi. Superintendent Murdie advised If a member of the public comes into contact with someone who is high or under the influence of drugs or alcohol but it is not an emergency they can call the non-emergency police number (101) or Crimestoppers (0800 555111). Officers will respond as soon as possible.
- xii. A member of the public questioned how does the interception of drugs packages being sent through post work?
- xiii. Superintendent Murdie informed them that it is primarily intelligence based and there are staff trained in the postal services to spot inconsistencies in parcels that may arouse suspicion. He advised that there are between 5 to 10 packages seized per week in the Belfast area.
- xiv. Another member of the public asked, if a young person is under the influence of drugs/alcohol and released from hospital, how do the parents cope?
- xv. James Scott commented that it was tricky to know what do in situations like this, the young person may not want support from the hospital and will be released. But parents can get support from BDACT and Barnardo's as well as Start 360. He stated that it was important to note that A&E departments of hospitals only assess immediate medical needs. However with BDACT's dual diagnosis service work is being done around this to enable young and vulnerable people to access mental health services.

5. Close

- i. The Vice Chair thanked the speakers for their informative discussion around drugs and thanked members of the public for their attendance.