

All together Now
A Strategy to Address the Harms of Alcohol and Drugs in
Scotland

Stakeholder Engagement

Scottish Government

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Written evidence submitted by Fife Centre for Equalities

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Fife Centre for Equalities (FCE) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's stakeholder engagement on All Together Now, a strategy to address the harms of alcohol and drugs in Scotland. This written submission focusses specifically on the lack of inclusion of people with protected characteristicsⁱ in the strategy.

Summary

Fife Centre for Equality applaud the effort being made by partners across Scotland to create a national strategy that will address the harms of alcohol and drugs in every aspect of our daily lives. We encourage all agencies involved in this strategy to develop more inclusive practices to address the diverse needs of people who share different protected characteristics.

Written submission by Fife Centre for Equalities:

1. Title of Strategy and Introduction

- 1.1. We believe that the title of this strategy is potentially misleading because the contents of the document does not make any reference to how it will address the inclusion of the harder to reach communities ensuring that they are informed, and their needs are being met.
- 1.2. The introduction of the document should acknowledge the diversity of the people this strategy is aiming to support.
- 1.3. A universal approach needs to take into considerations of people with different protected characteristics.

2. Data Gathering

- 2.1. We welcome the introduction of Drug Alcohol Information-System (DAISy) to help improve the data gathering across multi-discipline partners. However, we are concerned that the form does not include gender reassignment or sexual orientation. Without meaningful systematic data, it will be difficult for partners to plan appropriate services for people who share these characteristics.
- 2.2. Currently DAISy include name and other identifiable personal information. This could potentially discourage users to access support. We would recommend that a unique identifier is used instead.
- 2.3. Service providers should be encouraged to improve gathering and analysing of equality data to inform national strategy and actions. We understand that agency such as Crew2000 are supporting some services users from black and minority ethnic communities and are conscious that people from BAME

communities may face additional barriers to accessing services.

2.4. Sharing of equality data will help create better understanding and knowledge e.g. people from other countries may use drugs and substances of which Scottish practitioners may have little knowledge.

2.5. We are particularly concerned that there may be under-recording of drug-related deaths among people with specific protected characteristics because their deaths may be accounted as suicide or mental health.

3. Equality Impact Assessment

3.1. We are pleased that equality impact assessment is listed as a single action in this strategy. This action needs to be strengthened in order to identify whether discrimination and prejudice are being experienced by people with protected characteristics when they access support and services. We would recommend that there is a national impact assessment similar to the assessment conducted by Public Health England within the framework of the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658056/Adult-statistics-from-the-national-drug-treatment-monitoring-system-2016-2017.pdf

3.2. We also recommend that engagement measurement for national/local awareness campaigns should be in place to ensure harm-reduction messages and support are reaching the harder to reach communities.

4. National Conversations

4.1. FCE would welcome an opportunity to participate in a national conversation about how alcohol and drugs impact on different protected characteristics as a more defined way of understanding the perspective of users across Experimenters/Regular Users and Problem Users.

4.2. It would be beneficial for the strategy to include the possibility of research to gather knowledge of harms relating to protected characteristics that are currently unknown to practitioners.

4.3. There is scope for linking the Strategy with the growing awareness of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and extend research to children and families with protected characteristics, as they are more likely to experience community adversities such as living in a deprived area, neighbourhood violence, bereavement, bullying and poverty.

As detailed in <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/>, people who reported experiencing four or more ACEs are:

- 4x more likely to be a high-risk drinker and

- 16x more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The strategy demonstrates that it is difficult to develop and plan inclusive services whilst there is a lack of data and knowledge about specific communities in Scotland. We urge the Government and its strategic and delivery partners to use this opportunity to enhance data collection on protected characteristics, so that, in the future, harms of alcohol and drugs are appropriately and effectively addressed in Scotland.

About Fife Centre for Equalities.

Fife Centre for Equalities (FCE), funded by Fife Council, started in 2014 with the **vision** to inspire and enable everyone we work with to take action that makes Fife a more equal, fairer place to live, work and study.

FCE's **mission** is to develop a harmonised approach to build a collective voice to champion equality, diversity, inclusion and social justice.

Our **values** are to work with honesty, integrity, respect and transparency, and strive to demonstrate a fully inclusive approach in everything we do. We want everyone we work with to share these values in the belief that they will help make Fife a fairer and more equal place.

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ⁱ Protected characteristics are the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. They are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.