

THE EXECUTIVE

23 SEPTEMBER 2003

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CONSIDERATION OF SUPPORT FOR THE ALCOHOL ADVISORY SERVICE	FOR DECISION	
<p><i>This report is submitted to the Executive at its request.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report provides a summary of the issues surrounding alcohol treatment services in the Borough in light of the request to the Council for financial support to relocate the Alcohol Advisory Service.</p> <p>The report recognises the key role of the Alcohol Advisory service as currently the only provider of alcohol treatment in the Borough but acknowledges there are significant developments in the national agenda for alcohol treatment that may influence future commissioning of alcohol services in the Borough. The most significant of these is the imminent release of a National Alcohol Strategy.</p> <p>As a result the report does not support capital investment into accommodation for the Alcohol Advisory Service at the present time.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is the recommendation of this report that Members do not make a capital investment into accommodation for the Alcohol Advisory Service until their role within the local Alcohol Strategy is confirmed.</p> <p><u>Reason</u></p> <p>We are currently reviewing the Alcohol Advisory Service and producing a local alcohol Strategy, until this process is completed it would be presumptuous to recommend Capital investment.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 On 29 April 2003 a report was considered at the Executive on alternative locations for the Alcohol Advisory Service. This report provided two alternative locations for the Alcohol Advisory Service and sought capital funding for the project.
- 1.2 At this meeting Social Services pointed out that the future commissioning of alcohol services for the Borough was uncertain and that the investment in capital for the Alcohol Advisory Service may be premature. As a result the Executive requested a report from Social Services on the reasons why the Council should be supporting the service *with capital funding*.

2. Contract with Social Services

- 2.1 The Alcohol Advisory Service have a rolling three year contract to provide alcohol treatment services in the both Barking and Dagenham and Havering Boroughs. In March 2003 at the joint annual contract review meeting the Alcohol Advisory Service were advised that this contract would not be extended beyond March 2005. The reason for this was that the forthcoming release of a national alcohol strategy and a local strategy may have implications for the way that future services are delivered.
- 2.2 Given the changes that may arise from the national and local strategies it was considered to be a prudent decision to enable some flexibility in the commissioning of future services.

3. National Alcohol Strategy

- 3.1 The national strategy is due to be released in spring 2004. It is anticipated that the release of the strategy will provide a framework for the delivery of treatment services and be accompanied by funding from Central Government.

4. Local Alcohol Strategy

- 4.1 In anticipation of the national strategy the DAAT (Drug and Alcohol Action Team) have commenced an internal scoping exercise. This early work will place the Borough in a strong position to be able to implement the national level initiatives promptly.
- 4.2 The development of the Borough's alcohol strategy will involve all of the stakeholders and aim to meet the needs of the local population while fitting into the structure set by the national strategy. The linkage between community need and alcohol service provision is something that has not been addressed properly in the past and the intention is to take the opportunity to address this now. This will include consideration of the effects of alcohol misuse in settings such as police stations and Accident and Emergency as well as long-term treatment.

5. Organisational review

- 5.1 In line with the development of the local strategy an independent organisational review of the Alcohol Advisory Service is being undertaken. The main focus of the review is on the quality and cost effectiveness of the service provided to clients. This will assist in evaluating the performance of the Alcohol Advisory Service.
- 5.2 The review also provides an opportunity to consider whether the number and type of clients entering this service reflects the priorities and expectations of the Drug and Alcohol Action team and the diverse needs of the community.
- 5.3 This review will complement the development of the local strategy, will provide an insight into the manner in which the existing service is provided, and any gaps that need to be addressed through the strategy.

6. Accommodation requirements

- 6.1 While the Alcohol Advisory Service have been working with Property Services on accommodation options this has been based on the Alcohol Advisory Service's view of how the service will be provided in the future. The organisational review of the service and the development of the local strategy may suggest that a different type of service is required, for example increased outreach work which has different accommodation needs.
- 6.2 There is a need to retain the existing service in its current format until at least March 2004 and Social Services supports initiatives to facilitate alternative accommodation for the service in the short term. However making a decision on long-term accommodation based on the existing service may prove to be an impediment for future services.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Alcohol Advisory Service's accommodation situation has arisen at a time of development for alcohol treatment services both nationally and locally. Currently there is a lack of guidance at a national level and uncertainty over additional funding for alcohol treatment services. The DAAT is being proactive locally by assessing the existing service and commencing a scoping exercise for a local strategy for Barking and Dagenham. However it is too early to agree on the format future alcohol services will take in the Borough.

Background Papers:

None