

29 April 2005

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Dear Vicky

Stirling Area Substance Forum

The Forum, which is the local partnership encompassing health, local authority, private sector, voluntary sector, prisons and police which is charged with the responsibility of implementing national strategies on drugs/alcohol and tobacco welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation Supporting Police, Protecting Communities.

The Forum wish to limit themselves to questions 30 – 36 and make the following observations.

We oppose the principle of mandatory drug testing since a positive drug test in itself does not prove dependency and suitability for treatment. Imposing a full and specialist drug assessment on an individual who may not consider themselves a problem drug user or wish access to treatment is in our opinion a waste of valuable and scarce resources.

The Forum are also concerned as to who would carry out such a drug test and where an assessment would be carried out on an individual who tested positive, since an assessment carried out in custody is unlikely to lead to positive treatment outcomes. We note with interest that most assessments for DTTO where drug testing is an element are carried out in the community for this very reason.

We note with interest that although the drug test is mandatory, treatment remains optional. The forum are unsure as to the usefulness or effectiveness of this. Should the arrested person however wish treatment then additional resources would need to be made available since waiting times data from drug services indicate most are currently operating at capacity.

In conclusion, we do not believe that these proposals will in any way provide access to treatment and services for a group of people who might not otherwise engage with treatment services. The proposals do not address the fact that there are a group of problematic and/or dependent drug users who do not wish at this time to engage in a treatment process.

As a democratic, accountable and transparent partnership, Stirling Area Substance Forum have no objection to the Scottish Executive making our name or comments public

Yours sincerely
Liam Wells
Substance Development Officer (Chair)

Director: Helen Munro