

ADDRESSING PUBLIC INJECTING THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED INTERVENTIONS
**GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE**

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Prepared for Department of Human Services Victoria

September 2008

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	3
A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE	5
DEFINING THE PROBLEM	7
WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?	11
WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?	15
WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?	21
1 <i>User Orientated Services</i>	22
2 <i>Education And Dialogue</i>	24
3 <i>Environmental Management</i>	25
4 <i>Drug Use Prevention Interventions</i>	25
5 <i>Community Strengthening And Empowerment</i>	26
HOW DO WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?	29
<i>Program Evaluation</i>	29
<i>Monitoring And Research</i>	31
KEY CONSIDERATIONS	33
USEFUL REFERENCES	35
USEFUL CONTACTS	37

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all those who participated in the original research and / or the guidelines feedback process (Cities of Whitehorse, Port Phillip, Greater Bendigo, Greater Dandenong, Maribyrnong, and Stonnington. Also North Yarra Community Health, Health Works, Bendigo Community Health Service, Youth Substance Abuse Service, Victoria Police, ANEX and Vivaidis).

Local Solutions for Public Drug Use

These Guidelines are part of a larger research project called *Local Solutions to Public Drug Use*, prepared by the Burnet Institute for the Department of Human Services Victoria. Copies of the larger report are available from the Department in the Mental Health and Drugs Division, telephone 9096 0378.

INTRODUCTION

<p><i>Public Injecting</i> <i>- What is the problem?</i></p>	<p>In Victoria, during the late 1990s, an increase in heroin supply, coinciding with an escalation of street-based drug markets, gave rise to an increased visibility of public injecting, particularly across Melbourne. The practice of injecting in public spaces carries with it a number of health, safety and amenity issues, both for the drug user and for the wider community. While the prevalence of public injecting has declined since this time, and become less visible, it is still a marked problem which requires a comprehensive community response.</p>
<p><i>Responding to Public Injecting</i></p>	<p>Effectively responding to public injecting requires communities to develop the skills and tools to both comprehend and address a complex social problem. Where public injecting is occurring, there is a need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the impacts on the public environment (public amenity, discarded injecting equipment, crime, costs to business, and displacement from public spaces). • Minimise the direct risk to the drug users, including the increased risk of blood-borne disease transmission and overdose, and other harms associated with public drug use. • Limit the social impact on individuals and communities, including increased levels of marginalisation, fear and disempowerment. <p>Communities comprise a diverse mix of individuals and groups who interact on many levels. These include residents, workers, students, business owners, elected representatives, the unemployed and short and long term visitors. Each community will differ in the composition of its constituents and naturally priorities will differ according to each local area. The heterogeneity of the community and the influence of the groups and individuals within it will shape the manner in which members are engaged in the response.</p>
<p><i>Purpose of Guidelines</i></p>	<p>These guidelines provide program planners and implementers with suggestions to develop a comprehensive and effective community-based response to public injecting. They provide an outline of the process for gathering information and putting that information into practice. We also provide a series of questions or 'considerations' as prompts to program developers and managers as they go through either a program start-up, or a review of current activities.</p> <p>The guidelines are primarily intended for use by local government and community drug and alcohol action groups. They may also provide useful information for existing service providers, business groups and interested community members.</p>

<p>Background</p>	<p>This booklet evolved from research into community-based responses to public injecting in Victoria and the context in which public injecting occurs. The research - conducted by the Burnet Institute's Centre for Harm Reduction - encompassed an analysis of existing literature and reported data, coupled with wide-ranging consultation among organisations and individuals engaged in local responses.</p> <p>By examining approaches that appear to be successful locally, nationally and internationally, a set of common key characteristics were noted that effectively address the issue of public injecting.</p> <p>Key Characteristics of Successful Local Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A more cohesive community (characterised by high citizen participation in formal and informal organisations, and with well established local networks that foster meaningful social ties between individuals) is more able to prevent and respond effectively to public injecting.• Community participation and empowerment promotes ownership over the issue of public injecting. Successful responses encompass the widest possible community representation and are reliant on the relationships between members.• An educated community, aware of the complexities of the issues being faced around public injecting (and drug use in general) reduces the extent of fear and concern among its members.• Maintaining a relationship between injecting drug users, their advocates and the local community increases the chance of instigating collaborative - as opposed to confrontational - approaches.• Timely responses to community member reports and concerns engender broad-based support and foster a sense of inclusion and recognition.• The availability of adequate support services that can work with people who inject drugs to educate about the risks of public injecting. <p>More detail on the study and the results are available in the Victorian Department of Human Services report <i>Local Solutions for Public Drug Use: An investigation into community responses to public injecting in Victoria</i> by the Centre for Harm Reduction, Burnet Institute, Melbourne.</p>
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A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

So where do you start?

Defining the Problem?

Whether embarking on the development of a new approach to local drug issues, or reviewing existing programs, it is essential to have a clear picture of the context in which the intervention(s) will operate. The information gained from community members, data sources, national and international experience provides a foundation from which to determine the most appropriate means of responding.

What are we trying to achieve?

Any response to public injecting requires a clear understanding of what is to be achieved. Clearly articulating the aims and objectives provides the basis for assessing the 'fit for purpose' of potential activities and enables stakeholders to identify how they may contribute.

Who will be involved?

Successful and sustained responses are characterised by the widest possible community involvement and good relationships between stakeholders. Who should be involved, and how they will work together, are key questions. Finding the most appropriate means of bringing people together to work on issues is a critical aspect of any response.

What are the options?

Effective comprehensive responses to public drug use require an integrated program of health and social development interventions that are applied at multiple levels of the community. These can include user orientated services (disposal programs and needle and syringe services), education programs, environmental management, and community strengthening and empowerment activities. When combined, they act to provide a balance of harm minimisation and prevention interventions.

How do we know if it is working?

Reflection on the successes and failures, the positive and negative outcomes of programs, is essential for refining and strengthening existing and planned responses. Various evaluation tools are available to program managers to assist them with this task, and should be seen as an integral part of any intervention.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Program developers need to understand the nature, profile and context of each community, coupled with the local history of drug use and its responses. This will inform which strategies are appropriate and determine how they should be implemented.

Key Questions:

Understand the Community

- What are community attitudes towards drugs and alcohol and their users?
- What do people know about drug use?
- What is the history of drug use in the community?
- What are the patterns and trends of drug use?
- How has the community changed – the people, the place?
- How does the community operate to address issues of concern?
- What networks operate in the community?
- What groups have influence in the community?
- What conflicting values are there among the community?
- What statistics / research are available?

Understand the Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Influences

- What are the demographics of the community?
- What are the patterns of migration?
- What are the main occupations, levels of education, average income?
- What opportunities exist for young people?
- What is the youth unemployment rate?
- What types of housing are available to residents?
- What are the ethnic groups and languages spoken?
- What is the nature of disadvantage in the community?
- What are the levels and patterns of drug-related crime?
- What is the historical and current political climate?

Identify the Community Needs

- Who are the main stakeholders?
- What are the main concerns of the various stakeholders, including injecting drug users?
- Who is being affected by public injecting and how?
- What are the 'ripple effects' of public injecting?
- What do people expect to be done about it?
- What are the existing services and interventions?
- What are the gaps in the present system?

Approaches

Review history: review past community responses to similar or different issues, talk with people who were involved, and assess what worked and what did not.

Community consultation: surveys, focus groups, conversations with key community members, visit community group meetings, schools, local businesses, police and service providers.

Research community profile: make a plan of the different groups and their interests; look up existing statistical sources of demographic information (e.g.census, local government data).

Research impact of public injecting: look at existing data sources (eg, ambulance attendance data, heroin overdose deaths, national surveys, police and court data) to gain an understanding of the effects of drug use on the community.

The Role of Community Forums

Community forums and small discussion groups can help develop community connections, provide access to accurate information and address community perceptions of drug-related issues. They are particularly useful for obtaining feedback from local people about drug and alcohol issues in their area. Community forums bring people together to learn about drug-related issues and provide opportunities for them to work on emerging issues. When public injecting is prevalent and visible in a community, it is likely there will be conflicting opinions among individuals and groups, which may lead to emotionally charged situations. This should be taken into consideration when holding a community forum. Community forums allow for constructive debate, in order to build relationships, and to address divisions in the community.

In the City of Greater Dandenong, the Springvale Drug Action Community Forum (SDACF) conduct surveys with local business owners during an annual 'walk and talk' circuit. The surveys are intended to canvass traders' concerns and perceived impacts of any drug and alcohol use issues, gauge whether they perceive any changes in a specified timeframe, and provide an avenue for communication. The surveys are conducted by members of the SDACF, enabling a direct link with the group which undertakes community projects and provides advice to the City of Greater Dandenong.

Recognise the Challenges

Public injecting is an emotive issue. A high degree of stigma is often attached to those involved, and members of communities will have strong views on how issues of drug use should be addressed. Community forums can provide a useful space in which to discuss issues, however they can also be a place of conflict and heated debate. When undertaking a process of community dialogue, the benefits and risks associated with various approaches should be discussed. It may be more beneficial to the overall process to commence with focused discussions among specific groups in the community, the results of which can be tabled at larger community forums. Forums should be well planned and a skilled facilitator should be employed to guide discussion.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

The process of developing a local response requires a clear understanding of what the response is trying to achieve and how this fits with the community's agenda for social development.

2.1 Define the Core Philosophy and Principles

Key Questions:

- What does the community value: Safety and security? Diversity and inclusion? Economic growth?
- What principles should guide the response?
- What policies and plans at international, federal, state and local government level need to be consulted? (e.g. Ottawa Charter, National Drug Strategy etc)
- What community plans does it need to be aligned with?

2.2 Determine the Aims and Objectives

Key Questions:

- What are the key challenges to be addressed?
- What are realistic, achievable goals?

2.3 Approaches

It is essential that the concerns of people in the local community are listened to and taken seriously. Conducting a wide community consultation enables a broad understanding of opinion and provides the opportunity to discuss and articulate the response. This should include:

- Community surveys
- Focus groups with stakeholders
- Formal and informal conversations with stakeholders
- Community summit

Consultation must also be seen as an ongoing process that should include the key stakeholders, and can be conducted through both formal and informal mechanisms.

<p><i>Local Drug Strategy</i></p>	<p>A key tool in the development of a local response to public injecting is the formation of a local drug strategy, which should be linked to other planning processes and initiatives (e.g. community health plans). Articulating a community's strategy and directions enables stakeholders to identify opportunities for involvement, engenders ownership, and is vital to developing a comprehensive and diverse response. The community health plan also provides an opportunity to document the various aspects of the strategy and ensure they are linked with the core philosophies and aims and objectives.</p> <p>The strategy should provide background to the local response, list the aims and objectives, identify other policies and plans it is aligned with, describe the process for its development, provide a detailed picture of the components of the strategy and how they address the aims and objectives, who is responsible for their implementation, and how the components will be evaluated. A framework for the development of a local drug strategy can be found in the Drug Policy Expert Committee's Stage I report (pages 24-27), available online at:</p> <p>http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/downloads/dpec_stg1fi.pdf</p>
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Leadership

Effective leadership can galvanise community involvement, create the will to explore underlying issues of vulnerability within the community, and challenge prevailing attitudes and stigma.

The leadership role may be shared among various groups and individuals, and will greatly benefit from the involvement of respected individuals who are leaders within the local community, including sub-cultures. Where possible, these people should be identified and invited to participate fully. Adequate training should be offered to keep people up-to-date on issues and the available evidence.

How each local area identifies its leaders will be an individual process. However, the role of local government in providing leadership and/or support to community leadership forms a core part of a sustainable response. At the very least there needs to be delegated roles to follow up actions, network, advocate and plan. Without coordination, elements of the strategy can fall off the agenda at times when drug use issues are less prominent.

In St Kilda, the City of Port Philip (CoPP) has historically been at the forefront of the local government response, undertaking a pre-eminent leadership role in partnership with local stakeholders. Existing networks and relationships have been harnessed and built upon, which provides a strong framework for sustainability. The CoPP has undertaken innovative methods to include the voices of illicit drug users and sex workers at all stages of the development and implementation of the strategy.

A community development worker is employed to oversee the implementation of various aspects of the strategy in conjunction with community service providers, and takes sole responsibility for some initiatives. The position has historically been supported by councillors who are committed to a progressive and evidence-based response.

Guidelines:

- Clearly articulate the aims and objectives of any local response and how it aligns with the broader community social development agenda.
- Involve local 'champions' (community leaders who are politically aligned with key objectives) and opinion leaders to aid community discussion.
- Conduct community consultation into alcohol and drug information and support needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD).
- Develop a drug and alcohol action committee with stakeholder membership.
- Develop a local drug and alcohol strategy.

Considerations:

- How advanced is the understanding of drug issues in the community and how will this impact on the approach taken? Are there differences of opinion and how will these be mediated?
- Is there a common understanding and agreement on the community social development agenda?
- How does the community value its members?
- What are the relationships and links between stakeholders in the community?
- How does stigma and discrimination affect members of the community?

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED?

Successful and sustained responses are characterised by the widest possible community involvement and good relationships between stakeholders. Open and effective partnerships enable the sharing of resources and knowledge, create functional links within communities, influence the public's perception of the issues, and generate an effective and responsive network of agencies and individuals.

3.1 Identifying key contributors

Local government representatives, local drug and alcohol and welfare service workers, and local police form the backbone of a community response. It is also important to involve a wide range of individuals (i.e. residents, drug users), and existing local groups (i.e. church groups, senior citizens groups, ethnic and linguistically diverse community representatives, local trader organisations).

Key Questions:

- Who are the community leaders?
- What existing networks/relationships are there?
- Who might contribute to a local response and how?

Yarra Community Drug Safety Program

The Drug Safety Program at North Richmond Community Health Centre is proactive in building relationships with neighbours such as the nearby primary school, North Richmond Tenants Council, Office of Housing, Richmond Police, Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House, Richmond Asian Business Association, residents associations and businesses, and community organisations. The contact varies from conducting education sessions, personal visits in conjunction with local police, talks at meetings, or simply providing a point of contact.

3.2 Coordinating Committee

An essential component of any community response is a central coordinating committee. These committees may be specific drug and alcohol action groups, or form part of broader community safety forums. They serve to establish a clear direction for the local strategy. They may comprise local government, service providers, police, state government representatives, community group representatives, and in some cases local business owners, traders and residents.

The role of the committee will vary over time and can include:

- operating as a reference group or steering committee for local government activities;
- taking the lead in developing a local strategy;
- implementing initiatives;
- conducting community information sessions;
- acting as an information sharing forum between service providers;
- monitoring emerging issues; and
- actively creating links with other community groups.

The function of the coordinating committee may be assisted by the following:

- mapping community stakeholders and interest groups;
- development of working agreements that establish clear roles and responsibilities for partners;
- development of 'sharing networks' across municipalities to discuss existing knowledge and 'good practice' interventions;
- resourcing a dedicated staff member to undertake the implementation of components of the strategy; such as administration of drug action committees and community education schemes, building relationships between stakeholders, and providing a contact point for community members; and
- identifying what technical assistance is required, and how it can best be provided.

Local government is best placed to take the lead coordinating role in a local response. It is vital that their knowledge of, and ability to draw on, existing community groups and leadership structures is utilised, as it will significantly influence the level of community engagement. The community will also benefit greatly from having a specific local government employee who is experienced and knowledgeable of drug issues.

Working with the Police

Police have the potential to play a significant role in reducing specific drug related harms (such as overdose), and in increasing community amenity and perception of public safety. Engagement with law enforcement agencies will benefit from:

- ensuring police are represented on local committees;
- actively pursuing police involvement in the development of creative solutions;
- understanding models of community policing that employ a partnership model;
- providing appropriate community services for drug diversion programs;
- community/stakeholder education regarding the role of the police and how this sits within the community's vision of the local drug strategy;
- police education on the role of harm reduction services and their relationship to the local drug strategy.

Greater Bendigo Street Surfer Bus

The Greater Bendigo 'Street Surfer Bus' uses outreach to engage young people in the local area, providing various forms of entertainment on board. Staff are able to talk with the young people and refer them to services where required. The initiative is provided by a partnership of multiple agencies from the region, of which Bendigo Police are one. One of the project's key objectives is to build rapport between police and young people and to break down any perceived barriers compromising this relationship. The bus is staffed by police, youth workers and volunteers. It targets popular youth hotspots including skate parks and shopping centres, and also attends community events.

Working with Injecting Drug Users

Any response to public injecting will need to recognise that drug users are a part of the community and thus include them in the response. Drug users should be involved where possible in consultation, planning, and implementation of the local drug strategy and specific interventions due to their unique expertise (e.g. disposal bin location decisions and design process for redevelopment of public space).

- Stigma complicates the involvement of drug users in any response – all partners need to be conscious of how they approach working with each other.
- For many injecting drug users, wanting to remain unidentified may be a priority, therefore methods of involvement which do not necessarily expose injecting drug users to the wider community should be considered. This may particularly be the case in small or rural communities, or in areas where drug use issues have been a cause of tensions in the past.
- Further, many injecting drug users do not consider this to be a significant aspect of their identity, thus finding appropriate representation can be difficult.

Needle and syringe programs, primary health care centres, and state drug user organisations are a key point of contact for relationship building with drug users. Other possibilities include, for example, community chemists that provide pharmacotherapy services or detoxification centres. Appropriate consultation should also occur with drug user advocates (such as those providing services in the local area and state drug user organisations).

Working with Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies

Drug and alcohol agencies have an excellent knowledge of the circumstances surrounding public injecting and the needs of various stakeholders. In particular, service providers may provide a direct link to injecting drug users, and, in the absence of injecting drug user advocates, are often able to represent their interests. Equally, drug and alcohol agencies are in a unique position to communicate local issues and responses to injecting drug users and involve them in the development and implementation of a response. Primary Health Care Services and Needle and Syringe Programs, in particular, have contact with current injectors and a broad knowledge of the local context, and so are important partners in any community response. These services may also play a role in community education and engagement, which should be planned in conjunction with the community strategy and supported by partners.

Working with Local Traders

Actively engaging with local traders ensures that they are included in the community response, and that any immediate concerns they may have are recognised. It also acts as a monitoring tool, with feedback from traders often being a valuable source of information on any changes taking place on the street. Traders are often consulted in their capacity as business operators, less so from their position as members of the local community. Involving this group from the planning stages is important to engender ownership and prolonged contribution. Most of the local government areas investigated as part of this research identified the importance of one-one relationships with local business operators, particularly since many are time-limited and may not be able to attend meetings. For these reasons, approaches need to be flexible and maintain open lines of communication. Engaging a person who has experience in working with local traders may be a good place to start. Some options for engaging with local traders include:

- 'walk and talk' sessions where drug action group members, or local government representatives, go out to local traders;
- providing information packs to local businesses to assist them in handling drug-related issues that they may encounter; and
- offering training to traders in dealing with drug-affected people, conflict management and the handling of injecting equipment.

Coffee, Croissant and a chance to Chat

In Box Hill, a regular breakfast meeting is facilitated by the City of Whitehorse for traders to raise concerns and share information and strategies on drug issues but also other social and community matters. The attending Council facilitator acts as a conduit to relevant departments, enabling action to be taken where appropriate. The early meeting time means that most business owners can accommodate it into their existing commitments.

Working with the Media

The media, particularly the local press, can play an important role in education and building community support for local responses. Maintaining good relationships with local journalists, and ensuring that there is a regular supply of 'good news' stories that present the issues in a positive manner, are important aspects of developing a positive profile around drug issues in the community:

- work with media to develop their understanding of local issues, drug use and potential solutions;
- involve local media in developing a communication strategy to promote activities (media promotion, website and information kits);
- build and maintain one-one relationships with local journalists.

Guidelines:

- Local government representatives, local drug and alcohol service workers and local police are key agents in the partnership.
- It is important to involve existing local community groups, including church groups, senior citizens groups and local trader organisations.
- Successful responses are characterised by having the widest possible community representation.
- The police are an important part of any community response, and should be engaged in creative solutions.
- Maintaining as wide as possible involvement in a local response can lead to innovative approaches for community engagement and service delivery.
- A local drug strategy is the key tool for articulating the local response vision and engendering ownership.
- A local drug strategy should be linked to other municipal planning processes and initiatives.
- A central delegate needs to serve as a clear point of contact for specific community concerns.
- Position local government as the lead coordinators of the development and implementation of a community response to public injecting.
- Build on existing groups and relationships.
- Map drug and alcohol treatment and support services that deliver targeted services.

Considerations:

- Which policies and plans does the drug strategy need to complement?
- What other factors should the drug strategy take into consideration?
- How can the community be best engaged in the drafting process?
- Are the varying stakeholder interests adequately represented?
- How will the group ensure that all voices are 'heard'?

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Effective responses to public drug use require an integrated, comprehensive program of health and social development interventions that are applied at multiple levels of the community. While this approach should be common across all responses, each community's response will be different in its details.

Key Questions:

- What has already been done?
- What are the sources of information on interventions?
- What has worked / not worked locally and why?
- How will particular options contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of the local drug strategy?
- What skills and knowledge are required to develop specific responses: in local government? in the community? within existing organisations?
- Who should bear the responsibility for the various components of the response – funding, resources, promotion?

A comprehensive community response involves multiple and complementary interventions that act to provide a balance of harm minimisation and prevention activities. A community-based response should form part of a holistic strategy for addressing drug use and related harms.

<i>Drug and alcohol forum</i>	There are many lessons to be learnt from the experiences of municipalities developing their local responses. Local governments should support a forum for engaging in dialogue with each other, academics and service providers. Such a forum can facilitate sharing of information on the practicalities of developing and implementing local drug strategies, taking into consideration differences and similarities between communities, existing services and local history.
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Each component of a response should be considered in relation to its contribution to the needs of the user, the community, local, state and national strategic objectives.

How each individual intervention contributes to the aims and objectives of the local drug strategy should be understood. Developing a program logic as part of the local strategy will assist with this. A program logic demonstrates the rationale for the program and its specific interventions, ensuring the components are linked to the aims and objectives.

It may also be useful to compile a matrix outlining the various components and their contributions. This enables program planners to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening and support.

1 User Orientated Services

Disposal

Needle and syringe disposal is an extremely important aspect of a local response. Needle and syringe collection is ultimately the responsibility of local government, and councils may employ a specific worker or delegate responsibility to a particular council department. Alternatively, they may contract out syringe collection to NSPs or private companies, all of which require appropriate training and a precise understanding of their role.

Syringe management strategies help in reducing community fears around injecting equipment and provide an opportunity for education and dialogue regarding blood-borne virus risk, syringe handling and needlestick injuries. The following factors need to be addressed:

- a management strategy should include the widespread provision of needle and syringe bins in public places;
- clean-up services should be widely advertised as having a central reporting point for discarded syringes in order to provide people with an action they can undertake, and also to create a sense of empowerment within the local community;
- it is important that the collection system enables an individual reporting a problem to feel:
 - that their anxiety is being given due regard,
 - that their level of concern is being acknowledged, and
 - that a timely and appropriate action will take place as a result of their report.

NSP and primary health care staff may also play a more expansive role in community education and engagement through participation in local committees, attendance at public forums, and organising syringe-handling and disposal workshops with local community groups, businesses, schools, police, and residents. It is important to:

- use focus groups with local drug users to develop public education campaigns;
- run regular disposal education campaigns involving materials that convey simple messages;
- include key individuals who are perceived to have strong links to the local drug using community and are therefore well placed to disseminate the safe disposal message.

Health services

Drug user specific health services may be supplemented by fixed site and mobile needle and syringe programs and mobile health units, and include drug safety workers and mobile overdose response services, treatment and rehabilitation programs.

Aside from potential roles in community planning, education and relationship brokering, drug and alcohol agencies provide important health and social welfare services to injecting drug users, directly addressing some of the key factors involved in the occurrence of public injecting. Services should be adequately resourced and supported to achieve their aims, objectives and activities.

Health Care Partnerships

The Bendigo-Loddon Primary Care Partnership (PCP) is an alliance of 35 agencies providing health and community services in the region. Specific health needs and issues are tackled through collaborative networks, which may seek funding for specific projects from external sources.

Other services

Attending to the needs of drug users and their families may involve:

- a drug outreach lawyer to provide legal support to marginalised groups, particularly those with CALD backgrounds;
- housing support services;
- pharmacotherapy programs;
- skills development for employment and training;
- family and friend support and education services;
- post-detoxification support programs.

2 Education and Dialogue

Increased levels of education and understanding can mediate the degree of fear present in communities regarding drug use and will shape the nature of response that a community is willing to adopt. Education programs should look at the complexities of public injecting and drug use in the community, the services that are available and how these may be accessed, and the development of community responses to existing and emerging issues. Education programs may be administered by local government, local agencies, local services, community drug action groups, or combinations of these. Issues to address include:

- provision of meaningful and practical information resources for the general community and specific groups within the community;
- a large number of smaller more informal initiatives using a range of approaches appears to be the most effective approach (print, dialogue, internet) since the various methods reach a variety of individuals and groups in the community;
- inclusion of a wide range of perspectives and voices as part of the education program;
- regular community forums can keep the community abreast of emerging issues and local responses, in addition to providing an opportunity for people to raise their concerns.

The table below illustrates options for community education.

Community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia night • IDU-themed art exhibition as part of a community festival • Theatrical 'walking tours' • Guest speaker program • Participation in events such as Drug Action Week, Youth Week, Seniors Week • Festival attendance – distributing information resources • Youth participation groups
Develop education resources for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol and drug community information kits • Distribution of existing resources from the ADF, Turning Point, Vivaids and other organisations • Brochures detailing safe handling and disposal of needles and syringes (general public, specific groups e.g. senior citizens) • Newsletter by IDUs to communicate their experiences to the community
Develop resources for IDUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wallet cards to promote local IDU services • Maps of local syringe bin placement • Local drug services directory (hard copy and online)

3 Environmental Management

Careful and considered planning can result in an enhanced sense of safety and public amenity. This can involve:

- environmental design to discourage drug use in shared public locations (removal of obstacles which create hidden areas, improved street lighting);
- space management, such as improved pedestrian flow;
- management of public amenities such as parks and toilets; when places are kept clean, their users will also want to keep them clean.

The philosophy of involving the local community in decision making should also extend to public space management. The aim is to ensure new designs are amenable to all who use the space, including families, drug users, the elderly, and workers. This should also apply to the ongoing management of facilities (e.g. Friends of Local Park program, Adopt-a-station program).

Participation in Design

In the City of Port Phillip a 'design-in' was held for the redevelopment of a local park that was long associated with injecting drug use. This consisted of a consultation group made up of members of the local community, where efforts were made to include injecting drug users as part of the group. This process led to a better understanding by all participants of the complexities of the issues involved, as well as producing a sustainable outcome that ensured that all participants' needs were considered and addressed.

4 Drug Use Prevention Interventions

Approaches to drug prevention at the community level may involve "action to advance conditions for healthy development of young people, and to prevent and minimise harms associated with use of alcohol and other drugs" (Toumbourou 2002).

Examples:

AIM (Active Intervention Case Management)

A case worker works closely with schools and local services to identify at-risk young people and provide intensive case management for young people and their families (Odyssey House).

Fitzroy Youth Music Program

Music instruction sessions with young people who were formerly alone between school ending and their parents getting home. The program aimed to provide a fun activity in a safe environment.

Youth Input Project

Plans the direct involvement of young people in developing prevention responses to illicit substance use (Plenty Valley Community Health Service). Workshops with young people to develop young community leaders and provide opportunities for youth to express their views and concerns about problematic drug use (City of Greater Dandenong).

5 Community Strengthening and Empowerment

Empowering the local community to participate in the development of a response is important for creating ownership of the problems and their solutions.

Community empowerment should attempt to:

- generate broad involvement of members of the local community;
- engage sections of the community often excluded from decision-making processes e.g. IDU, youth, CALD communities, senior citizens;
- utilise creative approaches to ensuring there is a platform for all groups to be heard: attempting to ensure the 'vocal minority' do not dominate participation.

A community's capacity to respond to drug issues is enhanced by promoting social connectedness between individuals and across groups and organisations, and encouraging participation within community activities and local economic development. A community grants program is one way of facilitating this objective.

Programs that may be supported include:

- cultural and social development activities;
- drug forum projects by /for marginalised groups;
- activities that promote community partnerships; and
- youth, arts, recreation, and environment initiatives.

A comprehensive response to illicit drug issues in a community needs to incorporate programs that address underlying contributors to vulnerability, which may include social disadvantage, inadequate housing and economic insecurity. Attempting to address the social determinants of drug use is beyond the capacity of local level community partnerships alone and requires a whole-of-government approach.

Local municipalities can contribute by integrating their local drug strategy objectives into broader community development schemes that might be managed by state government departments. Also, local level programs are an important component of a broader strategy.

Guidelines:

- Effective responses to public drug use require an integrated, comprehensive program of health and social development interventions that are applied at multiple levels of the community.
- Program developers need to understand the nature, profile and context of each community, coupled with the history of drug use.
- Each component of a response should be considered in relation to its evidence of effectiveness and contribution to the needs of stakeholders.
- It is important to develop and maintain meaningful and practical information resources for the general community and specific groups within the community.
- Whatever form education takes, it is important to include a wide range of perspectives on the issue and target different groups in the community.
- A strategy should exist for working with media to develop their understanding of local issues, and build a program of advocacy in the community.
- Participation in a regular forum to share information among municipalities on the practicalities of developing and implementing local drug strategies, and responding to emerging issues should be considered.
- Empowering the local community creates ownership of the problems and their solutions.
- It is essential to maximise local community engagement and involvement.
- Policy and programs must address both direct influences on drug use and wider social context.
- Local municipalities' drug strategy objectives should be integrated into broader community development schemes and policies.
- Strengthen integrated response to drug and/or alcohol use and associated anti-social behaviour in public spaces, e.g. parks, transport interchanges, shopping strips.
- Develop systems to monitor drug, alcohol, and associated safety related trends and emerging issues.
- Enhance primary health care for substance users, their families and local communities.
- Ensure initiatives are complementary to existing programs and do not duplicate them, unless existing coverage is inadequate.

Considerations:

- What do you want to achieve?
- How will you 'reach' the community?
- Will the interventions be appropriate and relevant for all members of the community, or are you targeting a specific group?

HOW DO WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?

Evaluation of a community response enables planners and service providers to consider the effectiveness of programs and identify potential refinements and ways of strengthening the response. This requires a clear understanding of what is trying to be achieved by the evaluation process, agreement among all parties to actively contribute to the ongoing process of improvement, and the allocation of funding and other resources.

Program Evaluation

The process of evaluation may look to answer some key questions regarding the response:

- is the current mix of activities contributing to the goals and objectives of the local drug strategy?
- are the structures in place facilitating the achievement of the goals and objectives of the local drug strategy?
- are the individual interventions reaching their targets?
- are they achieving what they are designed to?

To answer these questions, program coordinators can look to adopt a variety of techniques. Firstly you need to decide if you wish to perform a *formative* or *summative* evaluation. A formative evaluation is concerned with the ongoing development and improvement of projects, while a summative evaluation assesses the overall effectiveness. It should also be clear 'what' is being measured.

Effects 'Effects' are all the changes attributable to the inputs and activities, and include outputs (immediate effects of activities), outcomes (medium-term effects of activities) and impact (longer-term effects of activities).

Impact 'Impact' refers to the goal-level effects of a project and normally refers to changes in health, social and economic status.

Outputs 'Outputs' are the products or immediate effects of a service or activity. An example of an output is 'improved knowledge of training participants'.

Outcomes In principle, a well-designed activity leads to anticipated 'outputs', which in turn leads to anticipated 'outcomes'. The 'purpose' or 'immediate objective' of the program is to achieve certain specified outcomes by the end of the program. Outcomes often refer to changes in clients' attitudes, behaviour, service utilisation etc.

<i>Impact Evaluation</i>	Impact evaluation is intended to determine whether a program had the desired 'high-level' effects on individuals and community, and whether those effects are attributable to the program intervention. Impact evaluations can also explore unintended consequences, whether positive or negative. This extensive process often requires external assistance.
<i>Contribution Analysis</i>	<p>While it may be possible to identify if certain outcomes are occurring, for example a reduction in public injecting, the more difficult question is determining just what contribution a specific program has made to the outcome.</p> <p>A contribution analysis approach attempts to demonstrate the relationships between interventions and the outcomes through the use of a variety of methodologies and processes of analysis. It differs from an evaluation in that it does not attempt to directly measure whether a specific outcome can be directly attributed to an intervention.</p>
<i>Process Evaluation</i>	<p>Process evaluation is concerned with how the program operates. Process evaluation investigates the internal machinery of implementation, ensuring programs are operating as planned and that resources are being used appropriately. A process evaluation can detect if a program is not operating as it should, which ultimately has implications for its effectiveness. Key questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how does the program operate? • what are the steps involved? • are resources being used appropriately? <p>A process evaluation can be performed by providers of the program in conjunction with the funding body and can be part of a quality improvement process.</p>
<i>Outcome Evaluation</i>	<p>Outcome evaluation provides a means of ascertaining the extent to which the aims and objectives of specific interventions have been met. It is a particularly useful tool for determining whether changes in knowledge and the application of that knowledge have occurred following a specific intervention.</p> <p>What is measured will be determined by the aims and objectives of the individual projects, but might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in knowledge and attitudes in the community; • amount of street litter (e.g. injecting-related litter); • uptake of treatment services such as pharmacotherapy programs.
<i>Output Evaluation</i>	<p>An output evaluation measures the activities of the program. It can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of clients / contacts; • number of education sessions delivered; • number of needles/syringes collected/distributed. <p>In conjunction with a process evaluation, a quantifying of outputs can give insight into the efficiency of a program.</p>

Monitoring and Research

Monitoring of drug use behaviour can act to alert stakeholders of emerging trends and enable timely responses to changes in stakeholders needs. This may be through a formal mechanism or as part of general dialogue with local stakeholders, for example:

- electronic mapping of locations of inappropriately discarded syringes and use of public disposal bins - data are used to determine emerging hotspots;
- monitoring of changes in access to services such as NSP and PHC – both number and type of service request;
- information sharing at local drug action committee meetings.

Specific research activities also provide a local evidence base that can be shared with service providers and other stakeholders in order to inform policy development and service delivery:

- review of services provided in the local area, looking at any gaps in the system;
- regular survey of traders and/or residents to investigate perceptions of safety and knowledge of interventions;
- triangulation of data sources to provide a comprehensive picture.

Guidelines:

- Establish a clear understanding of the questions that should be answered by a program evaluation.
- Decide what kind of evaluation to conduct based on what will be most useful.
- Apply contribution analysis techniques to identify the impact of the program.
- Build your evaluation strategy into the planning of the project – that way you will be collecting the required data throughout the course of the project and may be able to make quality improvements along the way.

Considerations:

- Who is best placed to perform the different elements of evaluation research?
- Are all the necessary skills to conduct the evaluation/research available within the organisation?
- Should it be contracted to an independent evaluator?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The development of community responses to public injecting should form an integral part of a general response to drug use and related harms, in the context of a public health approach. Community-based programs need to intervene at multiple levels in order to address the individual, the environment and the social context.

A balance needs to be struck between enforcing the law, maintaining public amenity and safety, and minimising potential harm associated with drug use.

- Participation, networks and education are important aspects of a community response.
- Responses are more likely to be acceptable to the public when they are well informed about the issues.

<i>Engaging with drug users</i>	<p>Relationships with drug users are essential. However, if people who are using drugs are part of a transient community, this may present difficulties for initiating and sustaining involvement in a community response. Drug users may also be reluctant to engage in public forums or general dialogue for fear of exposure. Many people who inject drugs do not consider this to be a significant aspect of their identity, which also complicates representation. For these reasons, and others, a local response should be flexible and enable a variety of relationships and partnerships to maximise participation.</p> <p>Further investigation and dialogue surrounding the public's view on what constitutes their 'community', and how all of its members should be regarded and supported, will further inform and shape the approaches communities seek to adopt.</p>
<i>Working with the Police</i>	<p>While punitive approaches to public injecting can be effective in reducing localised episodes of injecting, the effects of such approaches (e.g. intensive policing operations, securing public facilities) are often temporary and usually only serve to displace drug user groups, concurrently raising health and safety issues.</p> <p>Community programs need to identify the means of developing a dialogue and working with law enforcement agencies, effecting partnerships and looking to openly engage with all members of the community.</p>
<i>Innovation</i>	<p>The nature, profile and context of each community, coupled with the history of drug use in that community, will determine the appropriate strategies to be adopted. When looking at the options, thought should also be given to trialling new, practical and innovative strategies. In all facets of the response, the concept of 'quality' is crucial to success, particularly in terms of service delivery.</p>
<i>Promoting inclusion</i>	<p>The effectiveness of any response is dependent on many factors, not least of all the extent to which consultation is inclusive and represents a true process of participation. Constructing a process that promotes inclusiveness will have a major influence on the degree of ownership that follows.</p>
<i>Managing conflict</i>	<p>There is a need to develop approaches not only for managing conflict, but for identifying potential conflict so that steps can be taken to prevent it. When bringing together groups with divergent interests and positions, an experienced facilitator will prove a valuable resource.</p>
<i>Funding</i>	<p>Community responses need to find appropriate vehicles for advocating for funding and determining the prioritisation of resource allocation. Ongoing evaluation of programs and their effectiveness is a key tool for addressing this challenge.</p>

USEFUL REFERENCES

Local Drug Strategies

Examples of current local drug strategies are available at:

<http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au>

contact: Robyn Szechtman at City of Port Phillip

<http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au>

contact: City of Maribyrnong

<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au>

contact: City of Melbourne

<http://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/library/>

Drug Use Prevention

Toumbourou, J. W. (2002). *Drug Prevention Strategies: A Developmental Settings Approach. Prevention Evaluation Report Number 2*. Melbourne, The Drug Prevention Network.

Methods for Evaluation

Contribution Analysis	Mayne, J., "Addressing Attribution Through Contribution Analysis: using performance measures sensibly", Discussion Paper, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, June 1999.
Evaluation Handbook	http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/eacwest/evalhbk.htm

Other references

Rogers, N. and W. Anderson (2007). "A community development approach to deal with public drug use in Box Hill." *Drug and Alcohol Review* 26(1): 87 - 95.

City of Port Phillip. Jim Duggan Reserve. Design-In Evaluation and 'How-To' Guide. Red Road Consulting and City of Port Phillip. September 2002.

Community Partnerships Kit – Supporting local community action on illicit drug issues. Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Commonwealth of Australia 2000.

Further references are listed in the Victorian Department of Human Services report *Local Solutions for Public Drug Use: An investigation into community responses to public injecting in Victoria*.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Victorian Department of Human Services	dhs.vic.gov.au
Department of Victorian Communities	dvc.vic.gov.au
Victorian Local Governance Association	vlga.org.au
Municipal Association of Victoria	mav.asn.au
Association for Prevention and Harm Reduction Programs (ANEX)	anex.org.au
Victorian Drug User Organisation (VivaidS)	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vivaidS/vivaidS.htm
Australian Drug Foundation	adf.org.au
InfoXchange	infoxchange.net.au/index.shtml
Victorian Council of Social Services	vcoss.org.au
Indigenous Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Bibliographic Database (Curtin University)	db.ndri.curtin.edu.au
YSAS (Youth Substance Abuse Service) - Statewide	ysas.org.au

