

Owen O'Neill ?

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**Director of Families & Communities**



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**Mr John Compton HSCB & Dr Eddie Rooney PHA**  
**12 – 22 Linenhall Street**  
**BELFAST**  
**BT2 8BS**

**23 April 2013**

**Dear Mr Compton and Dr Rooney**

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2013-16**

**You recently invited members of the steering group for the New Strategic Direction for Drugs and Alcohol to review and provide comments on the draft Alcohol and Drug Commissioning Framework for Northern Ireland. The Department of Education (the Department) is grateful for the opportunity to review the document particularly as the current draft includes specific reference to the role of the Department and the Education and Library Boards.**

**The Department recognises and welcomes the work which is being taken forward by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency to develop the Alcohol and Drug Commissioning Framework and considers that it is important that those who have responsibility for commissioning related services are familiar with and adopt the recommended approaches.**

The draft framework has been reviewed by colleagues within the Department who have provided comments (attached for your consideration) on those areas which relate to the Department's remit or where the Department has a particular interest.

Should you require further assistance do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Wilson', written in a cursive style.

**LINDA WILSON**

## **DE Comments on HSCB & PHA's ALCOHOL & DRUG COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2013-16**

- DE does not commission services from external organisations in relation to drugs and alcohol and requests, therefore, that the term 'joint commissioning' is removed from the Regional Commissioning Priority where it refers to DE's role or that of the Education and Library Boards. The current wording which states "support effective delivery of alcohol and drugs policies and social norm approaches in school through joint working/commissioning with DE/ELBs" should be more accurately worded as:

**"Support effective delivery of alcohol and drugs policies and social norm approaches in school through partnership working at a strategic level with DE/ELBs when commissioning programmes. "**

- In addition please note that the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will be operational in 2013 and will be responsible for functions performed currently by ELBs.
- DE recognises that delivery of alcohol and drugs policies and social norm approaches in schools can be more effective through partnership working. It is important to note, however, that in the delivery of drugs and alcohol education the Department considers that schools are best placed to decide on resources or programmes they wish to use to enhance teaching and learning. The Department will clearly wish to be as helpful as possible in terms of making schools aware of any programmes developed as part of DHSSPS work in this area.
- The Department has been liaising with Council for the Curriculum Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) to take forward work to update Departmental guidance on drugs and alcohol and it is intended that this work will be progressed during 2013/14. Officials will copy the Commissioning Framework to CCEA colleagues so that they are aware of future thinking in terms of 'prevention' and building the capacity of teachers and can take account of this in their work to update Departmental guidance.
- The Department recognises that looked after children in many cases have particular and sometimes complex needs and are vulnerable to alcohol and substance misuse and that they do require additional support because of their life experiences.
- Research in Northern Ireland has indicated that a significant number of looked after children have low educational achievements which may impair their future life chances.

- **The Department is therefore committed to addressing the barriers to learning faced by looked after children and seeks to improve their educational outcomes.**
- **The Department welcomes the measures proposed in the framework to prevent and minimise alcohol and substance abuse in children and young people.**
- **The Department is currently working with the ELB LAC teams and HSCTs to introduce a resource pack for schools containing specific guidance to inform teaching professionals and Boards of Governors on the wider issues relating to Looked After Children and how the school has a role to play in addressing both the social and academic needs of the looked after child.**
- **This guidance will build the awareness of front line teaching staff and help them to identify specific issues relating to looked after children which may in turn help in the early identification of specific issues such as alcohol and substance misuse.**
- **Furthermore, specific barriers to learning when identified can be recorded in the looked after child's Personal Education Plan ensuring pastoral support and professional help, where required, is addressed and reviewed.**
- **The Department is supportive of any joint working which will provide prevention and early intervention in alcohol and drug misuse in order that this does not become a major barrier to the learning of looked after children.**