

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE ROLE OF THE AREA PLANNING BOARD (APB) IN TERMS OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE

MEETING: PUBLIC SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 15th DECEMBER 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Public Services Scrutiny Committee with background context to their scrutiny of Substance Misuse on 15th December 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Public Services Scrutiny Committee notes the background information and utilises it to pursue their lines of inquiry with invited guests from Gwent Police and the Substance Misuse Lead for the Area Planning Board.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Overview of the Area Planning Board (APB)

- 3.2 The Gwent Substance Misuse Area Planning Board (APB) is a regional partnership comprising five local authorities, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Gwent Police, Gwent Probation, Prisons, Public Health Wales, and representatives for service users and carers. The APB was established to deliver the Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Strategy, "Working Together to Reduce Harm," and subsequent action plans.

3.3 Strategic Purpose and Governance

- 3.4 The APB's purpose is to bring together all parties with a common interest in delivering and improving substance misuse services across the region. It operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that sets out collaborative arrangements, roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms for planning, commissioning, and managing substance misuse services.

- 3.5 The APB itself does not have statutory powers to commission services directly; instead, it makes recommendations to statutory authorities, who retain legal responsibility. The Lead Authority (currently Newport City Council) is authorised to commission services on behalf of the APB.

3.6 Key Functions of the APB

- 3.7 The following are the key functions:

- **Planning and Commissioning:** Develops outcome-based commissioning plans and costed implementation plans for substance misuse services.
- **Performance Management:** Oversees performance management, ensuring services meet national standards and reporting requirements.
- **Resource Allocation:** Manages regional funding (Substance Misuse Action Fund - SMAF) and oversees pooled budgets to ensure value for money.
- **Service Integration:** Ensures all funded services form part of an integrated care pathway, based on national guidance.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Identifies opportunities for regional service delivery to improve cost-effectiveness and engagement.

3.8 **Services Commissioned by the APB**

3.9 The APB commissions and oversees a range of services, including:

- **Assessment and Referral:** Single points of contact for adults and young people, providing assessment and referral to appropriate services.
- **Treatment and Support:** Funding for counselling, group therapy, clinical services, and access to residential rehabilitation.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Supports brief interventions, training, and awareness activities, especially for young people.
- **Family Support:** Services for families affected by substance misuse, such as the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Family Service.

3.10 **Partnership Working and Membership**

3.11 The APB's membership includes representatives from statutory bodies, voluntary and private sector organizations, service users, and advisory members from Welsh Government.

3.12 Member representatives are responsible for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the commissioning plan, acting as communication links between the APB and their organizations, and promoting equality of opportunity.

3.13 **Accountability and Reporting**

3.14 The APB is accountable to the Responsible Authorities and Public Service Boards (PSBs) for progress and discharge of functions. Regular reporting includes progress against commissioning strategies, local needs assessments, and evaluation of whether regional work meets local needs. The APB also arranges open workshops and submits reports to scrutiny committees, ensuring transparency and stakeholder engagement.

3.15 **Alignment with Wellbeing Objectives**

3.16 The APB's work aligns with local authority wellbeing objectives, particularly in preventative and equitable community and social care. The partnership approach

maximizes contributions to the five ways of working under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act: long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement.

3.17 Potential lines of Scrutiny Inquiry

3.18 Members have indicated they have a particular interest in scrutinising drug-related deaths in Monmouthshire and the dangers of synthetic opioids, so the following questions were given to Gwent Police and the Substance Misuse Lead Officer for the APB as a framework for the scrutiny:

- The prevalence of drug-related deaths in the county
- What formal protocols exist for investigating drug-related deaths in Monmouthshire and Gwent and how this shapes practice?
- The substances most commonly involved in recent drug-related deaths and what the primary substance misuse issues are in Monmouthshire
- What socio-economic and health factors contribute to drug-related deaths in the county and whether there is a commonality?
- What services exist to tackle drug use in the county, and how many people are accessing this support, and whether improvements can be made.

3.19 Members may also wish to question the following lines of inquiry as part of their scrutiny:

- The effectiveness of the APB's regional approach compared to previous models
- How services address the needs of diverse groups and incorporate lived experience
- What mechanisms exist for service user feedback and continuous improvement
- Sustainability of services in the context of changing funding streams
- What prevention and early intervention strategies exist, especially for young people

4.0 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 There are no direct considerations from this report.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 Not applicable.

6. REASONS:

6.1 To provide background information to inform the scrutiny undertaken by the Public Services Scrutiny Committee on 15th December 2025 on Substance Misuse.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTEES:

None required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

ackground Report of the Substance Misuse Lead Officer for the Area Planning Board
Presentation by the Substance Misuse Lead Officer for the Area Planning Board and
Gwent Police

10. AUTHOR:

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644233

E-mail: hazelilett@monmouthshire.gov.uk