

## Record of discussion - SDPC 13 – creating the collaboration



Hosted by the Academy of Government

Convened and Facilitated by Anna Ross and Mike McCarron

Date: Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March

### Introduction

Anna introduced new participants and explained that while we aim to be as collaborative as possible, it is not feasible to start at the beginning. Therefore, it is best to familiarise themselves with previous documents so that they know what direction SDPC is going in and can build collaboratively going forward. She also re-iterated the Chatham House Rule and the Commitment to Respectful Dialogue.

Anna then briefly paid respects to our recently departed participant Kenny Simpson, and brought in Fraser Shaw's suggestions of a memorial lecture/conversation in which we discuss ways to create collaboration between Police Scotland and broader drug policy stakeholders. Those who knew Kenny felt this was a fitting idea and we will take this forward.

Anna also highlighted the funding issue and that she and Mike are following up on funding leads for the Collaboration and possibilities for sustaining future work.

Mike then introduced the Taking Stock and Vision statement outcomes which this Collaboration is seeking, a collection of narratives in Scotland on drug policy but also practical proposals on how to proceed in developing current Scottish policy.

Anna and Mike laid out their view on this being a process of 3 stages:

1. first stage: the 2 years building up trust and a collaborative way of working and networks;
2. second stage: participants engaging with communities and institutions through a pre-defined set of questions and multiple ways of communicating;
3. third stage: to use the outcomes, evidence and experience of the previous 2 stages to build the case for a more ambitious public engagement strategy including such techniques as citizen assemblies, mini publics etc.

They also clarified that SDPC/RSA will be exploring aspects currently not being explored by the Scottish Government or other organizations, for example, options for change in the legal framework and governance structures. Importantly, discussion in the group highlighted that such engagement is in line with a more general aspiration for different communities to support the growth of participative democracy in Scotland and wider. This encourages citizenship and evidence shows that conclusions reached by citizens after mature deliberation enhance transparency and legitimacy in decision-making.

After the introduction there was a brief discussion about the concept of trauma-informed social policy. Recently we have seen an increase in trauma-informed policy decisions, but the point of trauma informed social policy is the acceptance that social policy may *cause* harms, and those harms need to be investigated in order to get a broader and more in depth understanding the impact of policy. This is especially pertinent of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and subsidiary legislation yet neither Scotland nor the rest of the UK have seriously engaged in understanding the impact of the Acts on individuals and society. Better understanding of trauma informed social policy would help change the narrative on drugs, drug use and drug policy away from the individual and focus on the institutional response (in addition to the individual response).

## **Engagement activity**

We then broke up into groups of 4 and conducted the following exercise.

- Break into small groups
- Taking questions identified at a previous SDPC discussion, select 1 or 2 from each column that resonate as significant and either improve on their wording or collate them with other questions so as to turn them into part of a set of questions to be used in a standard approach to engagement.
- Put them on the sticky wall under headings
- Remove duplicates
- As a group, discuss condensing down or confirming the questions.

The outcome of this exercise was, firstly, the development of 4 main topic areas with associated sub-questions and, secondly, agreement that they seem likely to facilitate in-depth discussion about drug policy and draw out interesting narratives and storylines. An important discussion within the group was about making sure questions are as open ended as possible, and being conscious of the use of language considering we aim to take this toolkit to multiple communities.

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1. Personal Experience
  - a. What is your experience of drug use and drug policy?
  - b. What impact does drug use and drug policy have on you?
2. Harm and Benefits
  - a. Are there harms caused by drug use?
  - b. Are there harms caused by current drug policy
  - c. Are there good aspects to drug use?
  - d. Are there good aspects to current drug policy?
3. Legality
  - a. Why are some drugs legal and others illegal?
    - i. Additional question- What is the difference between legal alcohol and illegal drugs?
4. Scottish Parliament's Powers
  - a. Should Scotland have full control of drugs policy?
  - b. If so how would we do it differently?
    - i. What should we do about cannabis?

Once we have the 3 conversations completed Anna and Mike will present the agreed key questions in a framework which all participants can use as a method for engagement with, and feeding back views of, communities across Scotland. Also, through this process we would aim to see a growth of support for change in drug policy from people across Scotland.

## **Attendees**

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