



Annual Report 2016/2017

**Working to reduce alcohol
and drug-related harm**

MISSION

Addressing alcohol and drug related issues; reducing harm and supporting positive change

With nearly 20 years' experience, ASCERT is Northern Ireland's leading specialist drug and alcohol support charity providing a range of services to adults, young people, families and practitioners to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related harm.

VALUES

Integrity
Accountability
Optimism
Altruism

VISION

Prevention

Individuals, families and communities are more resilient

People make healthier and safer choices

People will be more able to prevent suicide and provide support to those affected

Practitioners are more effective and competent in their roles

Intervention

People are more able to achieve and sustain positive change

Families are stronger and better able to cope

CHAIRPERSON AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

We are pleased to report to our stakeholders and service users that in the past year we have reached and supported more people than ever before. We have continued to develop our services across Northern Ireland and in particular in the Western and Northern areas ensuring greater accessibility and more consistency of service across the region.

We are committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for our clients and you will see the evidence of that in this annual report. Our services have delivered clear and tangible benefits to young people, adults and families, reducing the risk and harm from alcohol and substance use in their lives.

Examples of independent evaluation evidenced the effectiveness and quality of our services. Notably a Queen's University Belfast evaluation of the Alcohol and You service in South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) showed that 95% of the clients in our brief treatment clinics reduced their alcohol use as a result of our intervention. An evaluation of the Strengthening Families Programme delivered by ASCERT in Belfast

(BHSCT) and Southern Health and Social Care Trusts (SHSCT) has shown that we have achieved the strongest outcomes for families evidenced by that programme anywhere in Ireland.

We have continued to invest in our infrastructure and systems in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency and have introduced additional support processes for staff. ASCERT continues to work in partnership with others to improve our impact and this year we are pleased to be a founding member of the Northern Ireland Alcohol and Drug Alliance, a regional forum of drug and alcohol service providers which will influence policy and practice to the benefit of service users.

This is a challenging but exciting time for ASCERT as we come to the end of our current strategic plan and begin to consult our stakeholders and plan our next 5 year strategy. In the coming year we face challenges due to reduced resources available to deliver services in the face of an increasing need. We will be focusing on developing our capability to generate support for services through diversifying our income sources.

The achievements outlined in this annual report would not be possible without the leadership and support of our board, who give their time freely to the organisation, and to the management team and staff whose excellent skills, commitment and dedication to the work they do, change people's lives for the better every day.



Jillian Patchett,
Chairperson



Gary McMichael,
Chief Executive

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



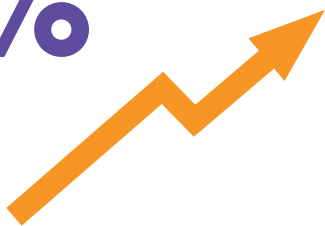
WE PROVIDED SERVICES TO

10,269

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

92%

REPORTED
INCREASED
STRENGTHS



4,735

PEOPLE RECEIVED
AN INTERVENTION



81%

OF SERVICE USERS
REPORTED POSITIVE
CHANGE

72%

OF SERVICE USERS
SHOWED A REDUCTION
IN DRUG AND/OR
ALCOHOL USE



779

FAMILIES WERE
SUPPORTED

63%

REPORTED INCREASED
STRENGTHS AND
COPING SKILLS



WE PROVIDED TRAINING TO

2053

PEOPLE



OVER

60,000

PEOPLE VISITED OUR WEBSITE



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS WERE SEEN OVER

300,000 TIMES

WE EMPLOYED **45**
PEOPLE ACROSS 4 OFFICES



97%

OF STAFF UNDERSTAND AND SHARE
THE VALUES OF THE ORGANISATION

78%

OF STAFF RATE ASCERT
AS A VERY GOOD
PLACE TO WORK



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO YOUNG PEOPLE



DAISY (DRUG AND ALCOHOL INTERVENTION SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)

DAISY is a service for young people and young adults aged 11-25 years whose substance use is impacting them, their families or communities and who are willing to seek support, and is funded by the Public Health Agency.

We deliver the DAISY service in the Western, Northern, Belfast and South Eastern Trust areas in partnership with Start360.

2306 young people and family members were supported

“Made me think differently about my drinking.”

“DAISY helped me to cut down on my cannabis use.”

“DAISY helped me to express my feelings.”



TARGETED
Life Skills
SERVICE

Preventing Drug & Alcohol related harm

TARGETED LIFE SKILLS

The Targeted Life Skills Service is a structured prevention and harm reduction programme for young people aged 11-21 years, who are deemed at risk of misusing drugs and/or alcohol. Funded by the Public Health Agency we deliver this service in the Western Trust and in partnership with Start360 in the Northern Trust area.

145 programmes delivered to **1229** young people

98% of people found the programme beneficial



"Even though I used cannabis I never really knew anything about it – now I know loads."

"I'm now drinking more water instead of alcohol."

"The course has changed how I think about alcohol and drugs."

"I will not smoke ever."

"Talking with my peers gave me new skills."

"I now talk to my family all the time about drugs."



STEPS TO COPE

Steps to Cope is a confidential, structured support service for young people aged 11-18 living in Northern Ireland who are affected by a parent's alcohol use. We have delivered the service since 2014 in partnership with Barnardo's, AFINet UK and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Over the past year we have continued to support young people and train practitioners to use the Steps to Cope intervention in their services.

71 practitioners trained in the Steps to Cope Intervention.

100% of those trained reported an increase in competence and effectiveness when working with young people living with parental alcohol misuse.

87,663 people reached with information about Steps to Cope, via newsletters, social media, health fairs and information sessions

65 young people supported

"I found having someone to talk to the most helpful and understanding the problems better like how addiction works and how problems can affect me."

(Male, 18)

"I got to get things off my chest"

(Male, 13)

"Steps to Cope has helped me to not get annoyed as much and have a better way of coping."

(Female, 15)

"I can understand that it's not my fault."

(Female, 15)

"I have more confidence and someone who can help me. I'm not feeling so embarrassed or ashamed."

(Female, 12)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO ADULTS



STEPS TO CHANGE

Our Steps to Change programme, funded by the Public Health Agency, supports individuals affected by alcohol or drug misuse to make positive changes in their lives. Adults affected by someone else's alcohol or drug misuse are also supported. Since establishing the service in 2015, the Steps to Change team has continued to develop key relationships with stakeholders and partner agencies in the Western Trust Area and has gone from strength to strength.

The service is delivered by highly skilled practitioners and we have continued to support their professional development. Key working staff have undergone further training in Motivational and Advanced Motivational Interviewing skills as a highly effective way of working, and are putting these enhanced skills in place. Counselling staff have achieved accreditation with BACP/IACP governing bodies and some have further enhanced their skills through training around trauma, transgenerational trauma and how this influences people's use of drugs and alcohol to regulate their emotions.



418 individuals supported

125 family members supported

ALCOHOL
and you

ASCERT
ALCOHOL
SERVICES

‘ALCOHOL AND YOU’ AND ‘ASCERT ALCOHOL SERVICES’

Funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Alcohol and You and ASCERT Alcohol Services support adults to make changes in their alcohol use and reduce the impact it's having on them or their family. We have delivered Alcohol and You since November 2012 in partnership with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and Addiction NI. ASCERT Alcohol Services has been delivered on behalf of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust since December 2012. Both services aim to address alcohol misuse at an early stage.

2016/17 was a busy year for both services:

Alcohol and You highlights:

- Enhanced our portfolio of Brief Advice Tool (BAT) leaflets with the addition of a maternity publication 'If You Take It, I Take It' explaining how lifestyle changes during pregnancy can make a big difference to expectant mothers and their babies. Training and awareness sessions with maternity staff were held to raise awareness of the messages within the BAT.

- Worked in partnership with Resurgam Trust to plan and deliver a joint campaign with social enterprise schemes (a taxi firm and off license) to raise awareness of safe alcohol messages.
- Participated in an event for the voluntary/community and statutory sector, 'The Past, Present and Future' to showcase the work of the project to date and share findings and learning.
- Worked with NI Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams (DACTs) to develop and launch a mobile app 'Know Your Limits' to help people understand the new alcohol guidelines released by the Chief Medical Officer.
- Developed three brief treatment clinics in partnership with South Eastern mental health services based within mental health inpatient units in Lagan Valley Hospital, Ulster Hospital and Down Hospital. Plans also to integrate similar clinics in the Mental Health Assessment units later in the year.



Alcohol and You

413 referrals received

95% of clients reduced their alcohol use



ASCERT Alcohol Services highlights:

256 referrals received

- Developed a brief treatment clinic in partnership with the Unscheduled Care team in Belfast.
- Ran a successful bus wrap advertising campaign across the Belfast Trust area on 46 buses.

"ASCERT made me more confident and determined..."

"They highlighted and showed how my alcohol intake was affecting me and those around me, and helped me work through it..."

"ASCERT helped me to see that depending on drink is not good and there's more to life than that..."

"I've controlled my drinking habits. I no longer binge drink. I count units and reduce days..."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO FAMILIES



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

27 families and **76** individuals completed the programme

Families showed significant improvements across all **15** of the programme's assessed outcome areas.

Strengthening Families is a 14 week programme aimed at improving the skills within families to deal with challenging issues that are impacting them.

It has the strongest evidence globally for delivering outcomes for higher risk families, increasing family strengths and resilience and reduced risk factors for problem behaviours in high risk children, including behavioural problems, emotional, academic and social problems.

Evaluation by the programme developers showed that the programmes delivered by ASCERT in the Belfast and Southern Trust areas achieved the strongest outcomes for families ever evidenced by Strengthening Families anywhere in Ireland.

"It is exactly the programme that my family has been desperate for to help my family needs."

"It has helped us bond more and communicate better."

"This course has helped me to connect so much more to my teenager, as I didn't realise we had the same ideas, dreams, concepts and values about life and people."

ENGAGE FAMILY THERAPY

34 families supported

The Engage service is a family therapy service for families whose children are at risk of anti-social and offending behaviour. It is a partnership between ASCERT, Extern and NIACRO, funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Out: Empowering Young People programme.

The aim of the service is to work with young people, aged 8-17, and their families at an early stage to reduce the risk of offending.

- Staff from partner organisations attended three training days to build capacity and share learning including Reflecting Team Processes (RTP) training; a Case Study Day enabling staff to share ideas and consolidate systemic skills through sharing and reflecting on cases as a larger group and 'Introduction to Systemic Practice' training for new staff to develop skills in this area.
- Seven young people from the Family and Child Empowerment (FACES) project (a partnership between Extern, ASCERT and the Education Authority) produced a short film, titled 'Face Value'. This was developed and produced in partnership with Engage and Headliner's 'Voices for Change' project and enabled young people to tell their story. An official screening was held for the young people, their families, staff from the partner projects and stakeholders.



"The best thing about family therapy was talking and finding out stuff about myself."
(Boy aged 10)

"I am glad that we have a future together. At times I felt there were no answers, or solutions to our situation. But now we have a plan that should create possibilities for our future."
(Father of 14 year old girl)

"I discovered things about myself as a mother that I never saw before, and was able to recognise and change. I learned that [my son] could deal with situations better than I thought and this was a burden lifted off my shoulders."
(Mother of 11 year old boy)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO COMMUNITIES



Western DACT Connections

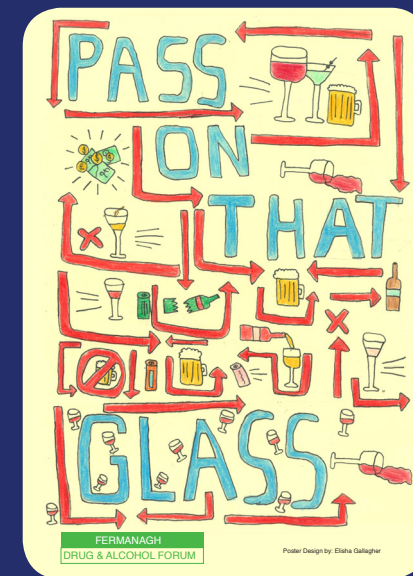
We hosted Connections Services on behalf of the Western and South Eastern Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams (DACTs). Funded by the Public Health Agency, the Connections service aims to provide information and advice around drugs and alcohol and signpost people and organisations to sources of help and support.

We delivered **42** drugs and alcohol awareness sessions to **417** participants including **232** young people aged between 14 and 18 years.

Information sharing

- Developed a “Road Map of Services” which was distributed to all forum members and their organisations, and health centres to signpost people to services in their area.
- Produced a leaflet in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Forums highlighting the dangers of mixing prescription medication with alcohol aimed at people aged 50+. This was distributed through the community pharmacist.

- Produced a leaflet aimed at all ages to highlight disposing of prescription medication packaging.
- **Reaching out** - attended **12** health fairs across the Western Health and Social Care Trust area to promote the services available.
- **Working with schools** - ran a competition with Fermanagh schools to design a poster around the dangers of drugs with the winning poster printed and distributed to all schools for display.
- **Targeted Life Skills** - ran two, two-day programmes in partnership with the Targeted Life Skills programme, in Omagh and Fermanagh with a total of **62** young people participating.



Winning design from WDACT Connections Service annual schools' poster competition. Winner: Elisha Gallagher, Model Primary School, Enniskillen.



South Eastern DACT Connections

Delivered **44** drugs and alcohol awareness sessions to nearly **600** participants.

- **RAPID bins** – worked in partnership with a range of organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors in relation to the RAPID (remove all prescription and illegal drugs) bin initiative. Three bins designed for the safe disposal of drugs were launched in the Colin, Laganview and Seymour Hill areas. There are plans for a further three bins to be installed next year.
- **Alternative Highs Initiative** – introduced a small grant initiative for community groups to encourage and promote alcohol free activities, with six community projects funded.

- **Dry January/Feel Good February** – supported by the Public Health Agency, **282** individuals benefited from a small grants scheme and participated in a variety of alcohol free community based initiatives.
- **Alcohol Awareness Week** – ran a bus poster campaign, a social media campaign focussing on general alcohol guidance, and delivered awareness sessions with the local community.
- **Partnership working** – worked with Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) officers in Lisburn and Castlereagh; Newry, Mourne and Down; and North Down and Ards to develop resources including signposting materials and information cards for PSNI officers.
- **Networking** – organised four Service Provider networking events which brought together alcohol and drug service providers with services from other sectors.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO SERVICE PROVIDERS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

- **15** courses developed and delivered to increase knowledge and skills in addressing drug and alcohol misuse and **2053** people trained.
 - **79%** of participants reported an increase in knowledge and competence
 - **79%** of participants have used their new skills in practice

Through the regional contract for Workforce Development awarded to ASCERT in July 2015 and funded by the Public Health Agency, we continued to design, develop and deliver high quality and relevant training designed to meet the training needs of the workforce within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors across Northern Ireland. There was substantial interest in our basic drugs and alcohol training with demand exceeding the volume of courses available. As a result we delivered a number of 'in-house' training sessions.

The Accredited Advanced Module (OCN Level 3 Certificate in Tackling Substance Misuse) experienced significant demand with a waiting list in operation. Our 'Working with Substance Misuse in a Homeless Setting' course - delivered in partnership with the Council for the Homeless in Northern Ireland - was also heavily subscribed.

Regional Initial Assessment Tool for young people (RIAT) training was well received and several voluntary organisations are now deploying the tool for internal operational purposes.

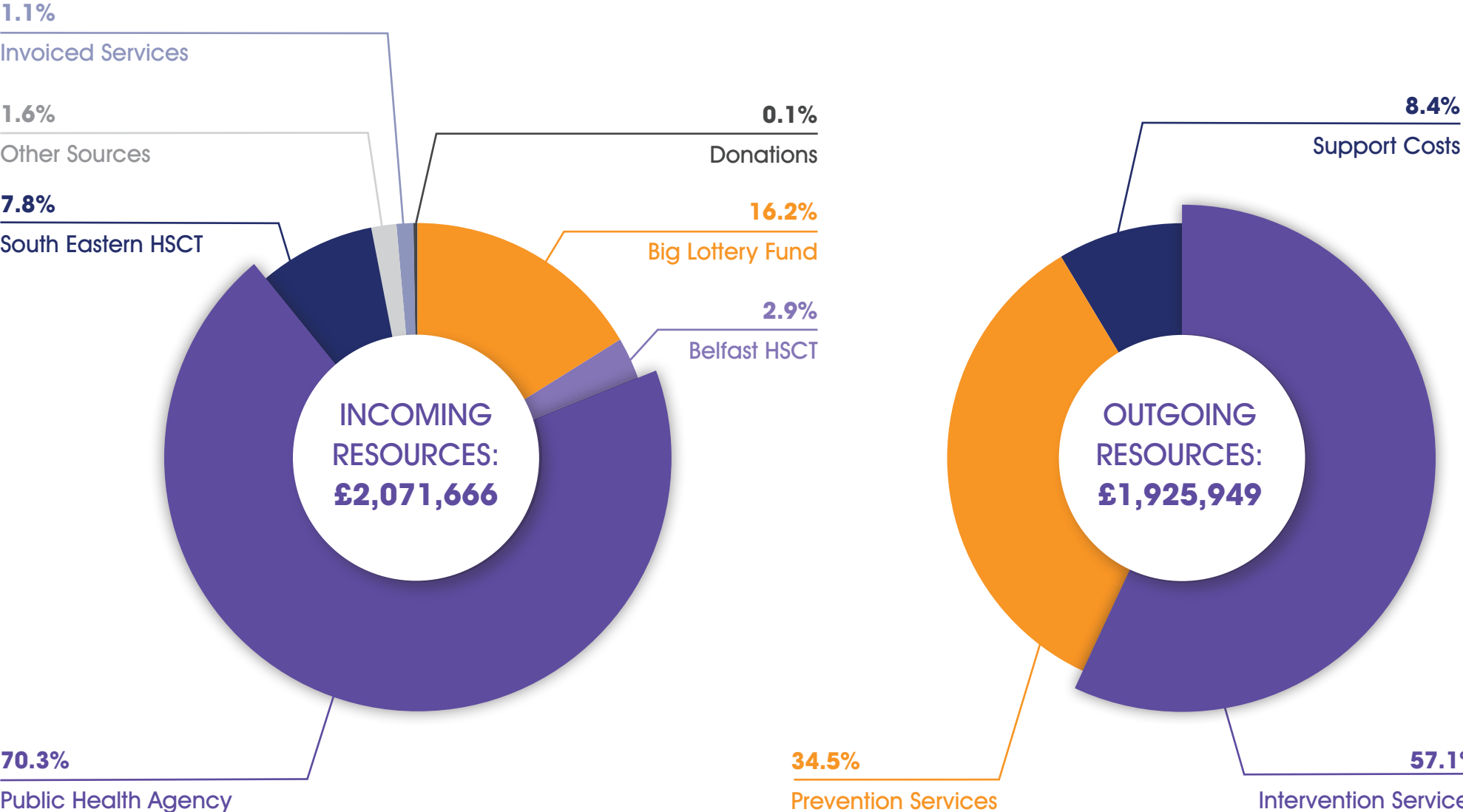
"Interactive, plenty of information and scenarios which made the training meaningful and applicable in real life situations."

"Very educational, made me aware of various techniques when dealing with young people."

"Increased my knowledge and understanding of illicit drugs."

"The wide range of knowledge in the room enabled shared experience and learning."

FINANCIALS



BOARD 16/17

Jillian Patchett (Chairperson)
Dr Andrew Percy (Vice Chairperson)
Heather Graham (Treasurer)
Clare Flynn (Assistant Treasurer)
Dr Anne Campbell
Billy McMillan
Adrian Glackin
Elizabeth Esler
Peter Moorehead
Angela Boyle
Mari-Louise Mackey

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Gary McMichael (Chief Executive Officer)
John Hunsdale (Director of Operations)
Siobhan Wolfe (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

Thank you to all our funders for their support:

Public Health Agency

Big Lottery Fund

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Department for Infrastructure

Belfast City Council

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