



Strategic Plan 2018-23



Introduction

We are delighted to present ASCERT's corporate strategy for the period 2018-2023. Although overall population levels of alcohol or drug use have been stable in recent years, the potency, variety and accessibility of drugs has increased. Our services are seeing more heavy and persistent use and the mixing of multiple drug types including alcohol, which is putting users at higher risk of harm. Service users are presenting with more complex issues than before, with mental wellbeing, trauma, economic factors and social issues being common underlying issues contributing to substance use.

The absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and a working Programme for Government in Northern Ireland presents a challenge to our planning process. It is essential that there is a regional strategy in Northern Ireland and a framework for delivery that is fit for purpose to address future needs and that has a long term approach to reducing the impact of substance use in our society.

In our strategy for the next five years we have set out three overarching themes that will guide our approach and five strategic outcomes that will be the priority areas for the organisation.

ASCERT will have a greater focus on preventing alcohol and drug use, intervening at an early stage in order to reduce the number of people that use alcohol or drugs, experience harm or become dependent. Greater emphasis will be placed on reducing risk through harm reduction approaches and supporting recovery outcomes for service users.

ASCERT is committed to influencing policy and practice, so that we are all doing the right things and doing them well, that frontline services will meet the future needs of service users and that we are delivering high quality outcomes in all aspects of our work.



Jillian Patchett
Chairperson



Gary McMichael
Chief Executive

Who we are and what we do

ASCERT is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and a company limited by guarantee. The organisation has been in existence since 1998 and is one of the largest charities addressing drug and alcohol issues across Northern Ireland. ASCERT is overseen by a Board of Directors who act in a voluntary capacity and are responsible for the governance arrangements of the charity. ASCERT delivers its services across all of Northern Ireland and operates from a head office in Lisburn and regional offices in Belfast, Magherafelt and Omagh. We have around 50 staff, and are supported by independent contractors and volunteers with an operating budget of around £2million.

Services

The work of the organisation is mainly focused on services and activities that will have an impact on the harm resulting from alcohol or drug use, addressing these issues directly or through other work around other relevant social factors.

The main service areas we currently provide include;

- Information and signposting
- Community based initiatives addressing substance use issues
- Prevention, lifeskills and harm reduction programmes for young people
- Prevention programmes for parents and whole families
- Interventions and support for young people affected by substance use and their family members
- Interventions and support for adults affected by substance use and for family members
- Supports for people affected by another person's substance use
- Family therapy services
- Training and development programmes for organisations, workers and volunteers in relation to substance use issues and also suicide prevention

Strategic Plan Map



Our Mission

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

Our Values

Our values are the core beliefs of ASCERT that should be reflected in all its activity and are experienced by everyone that encounters the organisation.

Integrity

ASCERT will demonstrate integrity in everything we do, acting honestly and reflecting moral and ethical principles.

Accountability

ASCERT will be open and transparent in its conduct and be answerable to its members and stakeholders.

Hope

ASCERT believes there is hope in every situation, and with the right help at the right time, every person can achieve change for the better.

Progressive

ASCERT will be sensitive to changing needs, consider opportunities to innovate and adapt in order to be effective in the delivery of outcomes for our service users.

Strategic Themes

To be effective it is not only important to do the right things that will help us meet our objectives but also to do things in the right way. We have identified three key strategic themes that we believe are essential to effectively meeting the needs of our stakeholders and service users and that will guide our approach in the coming years.

Being evidence informed and outcomes focused

- We are guided by evidence of what works.
- We evaluate our work and use this to improve what we do and inform others.
- We define success by the difference we have made, as well as how much we have done.

Putting service users at the centre of what we do

- We engage service users to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of our work.
- Our main concern is delivering the best experience and outcome for the service user.
- Our services are person centred and adaptive to meet each service user's needs

Taking a holistic approach to addressing alcohol and drugs

- We view substance use in the context of the whole person, the family and community.
- We work collaboratively with others and utilise resources in the community to meet service user needs.
- We work to address other social factors that can help impact alcohol and drug issues.

Strategic Outcome 1: Influence policy, practice and the public

Strategic Objective	Activity
1.1 Organise campaigns to raise awareness and to promote harm reduction around specific issues.	<p>Lead an annual campaign and activities around identified priority issues.</p> <p>Support regional campaigns from PHA, NIADA or others.</p>
1.2 Promote examples of evidenced approaches to address alcohol and drug related issues.	<p>Promote evidence of good practice to stakeholders through communications, training programmes and events.</p> <p>Hold an annual seminar to profile examples of practice.</p> <p>Support the implementation of the Icelandic Model of Prevention for Young People in Northern Ireland.</p>
1.3 Demonstrate effective and collaborative working through regional and local partnerships.	Active contribution to regional and local partnerships.
1.4 Inform policy and practice through research and evaluation.	<p>Undertake or participate in specific research projects.</p> <p>Evidence the effectiveness of ASCERT services through evaluation.</p>
1.5 Increase stakeholders awareness of the ASCERT brand and services.	Implement a marketing strategy to promote the organisation and its services to the public and stakeholders.

Strategic Outcome 2 : Build capacity and skills to address alcohol, drugs and other related issues

Strategic Objective	Activity
2.1 Provide training and development programmes for drugs, alcohol and other related issues to the workforce across all sectors.	<p>Deliver a regional training service to the public, voluntary and private sectors.</p> <p>Develop and deliver programmes that respond to emerging issues and specific needs.</p>
2.2 Deliver training and development programmes for suicide prevention, intervention, postvention and recovery.	<p>Deliver training programmes to the public, voluntary and private sectors.</p> <p>Provide support and development for caregivers.</p>
2.3 Develop resources that will be of practical support in the delivery of services.	Develop educational, self-help and practical tools that can be used by practitioners and service users
2.4 Support the ongoing development of ASCERT staff to deliver services effectively	Build the competence of our workforce through a staff development strategy

Strategic Outcome 3: Reduce the harm from alcohol or drug use through prevention, early intervention and treatment

Strategic Objective	Activity
3.1 Provide information and signposting.	Provide information and signposting supports face to face, by telephone and through digital platforms.
3.2 Provide prevention, lifeskills and harm reduction programmes to young people, adults and families.	<p>Develop an integrated prevention strategy for the organisation.</p> <p>Deliver lifeskills and harm reduction services to targeted groups.</p> <p>Deliver the Strengthening Families Programme and further develop that model in community settings.</p>
3.3 Provide early intervention and treatment for young people, adults and families impacted by alcohol or drug use.	<p>Deliver community based interventions to young people adults and family members</p> <p>Embed systemic practice in ASCERT services.</p>
3.4 Support young people and adults impacted by another person's alcohol or drug use.	<p>Support the regional implementation of the Steps to Cope intervention for young people living with hidden harm.</p> <p>Provide supports for adult family members.</p>
3.5 Service models are integrated with other services and settings to provide more holistic supports for individuals and families.	<p>Develop partnerships and pathways with other services.</p> <p>Develop examples of embedding drug and alcohol services within other settings.</p>
3.6 Implement initiatives using technology to improve service delivery.	Develop an interactive website to improve access to our services and support for service users.

Strategic Outcome 4: Help people sustain change and support their recovery

Strategic Objective	Activity
4.1 A recovery approach is integrated across the organisation and its services.	Develop a recovery strategy for the organisation.
4.2 Provide supports to prevent relapse.	A relapse prevention pathway is available across services. Support wider recovery outcomes through links with recovery colleges, community services and resources
4.3 Provide a recovery support model for service users.	Develop a peer support model for service users
4.4 Provide a support model for families.	Develop a peer support group for families
4.5 Develop self-help resources for service users	Self-help resources are developed and available to service users across services

Strategic Outcome 5: Optimise available resources to deliver high quality and effective services

Strategic Objective	Activity
5.1 Demonstrate effective good governance practice.	Demonstrate governance arrangements against good practice standards.
5.2 Our systems to robustly demonstrate outcomes across the organisation.	Implement an outcomes framework for the organisation. Share outcome information through ASCERT's Annual Report
5.3 Demonstrate quality throughout the organisation.	Achievement of Investor in People Silver award and other recognised standards.
5.4 ASCERT has the resources to sustain the organisation	Implement a sustainability plan with a focus on income diversity and business development. Establish a training services trading arm.
5.5 We have a capable workforce to meet organisational and service needs.	Staff have the right skills to meet organisation and service needs Effective training, support and supervision
5.6 Service user involvement is integrated throughout the organisation	Service User Involvement strategy implemented. Service users involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of our work.

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