



8 CONCLUSION

Young people are using and abusing drugs. Reality dictates that we must assume that this situation is not going to change in the foreseeable future. As unpalatable as this situation is, it has to be recognised and addressed.

Young people themselves are the only ones who can decide to stop using drugs. If a young person has not made, or is not willing to make that decision then any number of drug education programmes, any operations to restrict the flow of a particular drug or any increases in penalties for trafficking will, in the long term, fail.

That such a situation exists can in no way resolve a society from its duty to assist and care for its young people. If young people are going to take drugs we need to attempt to ensure that, as far as possible, the harmful effects of those drugs are minimised. This does not mean condoning or encouraging drug use; rather, it means taking a detached view of the situation and ensuring that any strategies implemented are realistic.

As there is no single or simple solution to the drugs problem we must accept the need to look more widely, to accept our limitations, and through our frustration and desperation to seek alternatives which have realistic chances of success. Harm minimisation strategies, as controversial as they may seem, need to be considered as viable options in any comprehensive drug policy.

The fact that some governments have already decided to supplement their drug policies with harm minimisation strategies which operate in tandem with a policy of eradication, indicates that this questioning and seeking of alternatives is underway.