

Rehab centre's service to be expanded, says MEC

Estelle Ellis

THE Department of Social Development is looking at expanding the service offered by the Ernst Malgas Treatment Centre in New Brighton, MEC Pumza Dyantyi said.

She was at the centre yesterday to receive a briefing on its operations.

Dyantyi said with children as young as eight years old being diagnosed with substance abuse problems, her department would also be liaising with the education department to step up the fight against drug and alcohol abuse.

Dyantyi was moved to the social development portfolio from health in a provincial cabinet reshuffle at the beginning of the month.

"Knowing the extent of the problem of substance abuse in the province, we must start thinking about replicating the work this centre is doing in other places in the province," she said.

Dyantyi said she was impressed with the work the centre was doing as it had a low relapse rate.

Since the centre opened in 2016, 270 children have accessed treatment there – and of those, only six have been readmitted after relapsing.

The programme's duration is 10 weeks and makes provision for a maximum of 38 children per block.

Dyantyi said she was concerned that the centre was set up at this stage to either take boys

or girls but not both at the same time.

"What do you do with a girl child that comes during a block for boys?" she asked.

She said officials were thinking of finding a way to admit patients of both genders at the same time.

"I think while the number of places open to patients with substance abuse problems is inadequate, the centre is doing a sterling job."

Dyantyi said while the growing problem of substance abuse was not solely an Eastern Cape issue, it was a new phenomenon in the province to have such a high rate of abusers.

"We are looking at addressing the problem of fractured families, psycho-social problems, unemployment and peer pressure," she said.

Dyantyi said given the alarming number of youngsters under the age of 13 found to have substance abuse problems, officials were engaging with schools to address the issue.

"We must all fight this together," she said.

"Social workers are reporting to us that children as young as eight are abusing drugs and alcohol."

She said the list of infrastructure problems at the centre, such as a defective electric fence and the majority of geysers being out of order, had been reported to the department of public works.

"[The department] has already started to fix the things that are broken at the centre," she said.

IMPRESSED:
Social
Development
MEC Dr
Pumza
Dyantyi,
left, and
head of
department
Ntombi
Baart
discuss
their visit to
the Ernst
Malgas
Treatment
Centre

Picture:
FREDLIN
ADRIAAN

