

A monthly update containing comment, policy, data, reports, parliamentary news, and debates of relevance to anyone working to improve life for those affected by drugs and alcohol.

POLICY BRIEFING

June 2015

Contents

Editorial	2
Parliamentary roundup	3
Consultations	4
Reports and resources	5
FEATURED ISSUE	
State of Caring 2015	8

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Editorial

In 2015-16, Adfam is taking on an exciting programme of work on behalf of the [Recovery Partnership](#). The Recovery Partnership was formed in 2011 by DrugScope, the Recovery Group UK, and the Substance Misuse Skills Consortium, with the aim of developing good-practice work and furthering the ambitions around recovery set out in the [Drug Strategy 2010](#) (pdf).

Over the last four years, it has been involved in policy work on a wide range of issues, from [drug and alcohol use in older people](#) (pdf), to the links between [substance use and mental health issues](#) (pdf), and treatment gaps for people experiencing 'dual diagnosis'. The Partnership has also conducted two [State of the Sector](#) surveys, providing insights into the current conditions of drug and alcohol treatment in England. Much of this work was led by DrugScope, which sadly closed in April 2015. Adfam are delighted to have the opportunity to build on the progress made by DrugScope by continuing this important programme of work until March 2016.

Adfam's work with the Recovery Partnership will be extremely varied. As well as coordinating another *State of the Sector* survey which will launch in September 2015, we will run three roundtable events in different parts of the country to highlight [regional innovation](#) in treatment and recovery. The first of these will take place in Birmingham in July and centre on how services can become effectively contribute to recovery in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

Another strand of the work will look at the role of families, and family support, in [building recovery capital](#) for people with a drug or alcohol problem. This will serve to emphasise the importance of support for family members affected by a loved one's drug or alcohol use; something clearly chiming with Adfam's wider mission. We will also consult drug and alcohol commissioners to find out how we can best support their work. For further information about these projects or to get involved please do [get in touch](#) or follow us on Twitter at [@Recovery_Part](#).

On another note, Adfam is continuing to work to improve the safeguarding of children whose parents or carers receive opioid substitution therapy (OST), following the publication of our report [Medications in Drug Treatment: Tackling the Risks to Children](#) (pdf) last April. The research found that children are dying and coming to serious harm after ingesting OST medications with depressing regularity. We are now working on a 'Year +1' report, which will look at the progress made in meeting the recommendations of the report, and provide updated facts and statistics. To ensure that Local Authorities address the issue, we are also running a pilot with five local areas to review their existing policies and practice, and helping to implement changes to better protect children against this risk.

We will then be offering Local Authorities across England and Wales the opportunity to work with Adfam to develop a blueprint for local action. [Find out more and download the offer letter here](#). This is a unique opportunity for local authorities to receive free training on the crucial matter of safeguarding children from the risks posed by highly toxic OST medications.

Lauren Garland
Policy Coordinator (Recovery Partnership)

Parliamentary roundup

Overview

This month, a high level of questions asked were on the Psychoactive Substances Bill and how changes will be made to the availability of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

Diana Johnson MP [asked the Home Secretary](#) (a) what facilities are present to assess the chemical content of suspected New Psychoactive Substances in the UK and (b) how many new psychoactive substances have been identified by the Forensic Early Warning System (FEWS), and how many of those have been banned.

Mike Penning MP [responded to Johnson](#), explaining that the Psychoactive Substances Bill provides for a blanket ban on the production, distribution, sale and supply of New Psychoactive Substances for the protection of young people. He also explained that FEWS figures for the 2014-15 will be published in due course, and of the new substances identified, by March 2014²² had now been controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. There will be a continuous assessment of the availability of NPS to allow appropriate action to be taken place.

On the same topic of NPS, Luciana Berger MP [asked Penning](#) what plans have been made with services including prisons, police and public health practitioners to ensure that the proposed ban of NPS can be enforced. Penning responded, listing the partners involved in the drafting of the Psychoactive Substances Bill, including the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers and the National Police Chief's Council.

Helen Jones MP [asked Penning](#) about the steps being taken to raise awareness of the dangers of 'legal highs' amongst young people. Penning detailed a range of activities aiming to raise awareness and discourage use among young people. Activities include:

- A resource pack published last March to enable those working with young people to have conversations with NPS users to raise awareness of the risks involved
- Continuous updating of FRANK, to keep young people updated with the emerging patterns of new drugs and their uses
- Awareness raising to festival organisers, highlighting NPS dangers in order to encourage them to adopt a 'no legal highs' policy.

Consultations

[How can we improve or optimise Opioid Substitution Treatment \(OST\)](#) – Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD)

This survey seeks the views of those who are currently in receipt of OST or who have previously been prescribed OST, in order to gain their views on the quality of OST in England and how it could be improved for heroin users.

[Legal highs – The views of frontline practitioners in the UK](#) - Tonic

This survey is aimed at staff in key agencies that come into contact with so-called “legal highs” users, seeking for their experiences and views. There is also a survey for people who use “legal highs” [here](#).

[Psychological effects of MDMA: the function of the drug, set and setting](#)

This survey is part of research investigating a range of psychological and social factors that might influence the effects of taking MDMA, aiming to understand what makes the effects differ among people. The survey is intended for MDMA and/or poly-drug users.

Reports and resources

Drugs, alcohol & families

[Assessments and the Care Act: Getting help in England from April 2015](#) (pdf) – Carers UK

This factsheet covers the new system of care and support, as influenced by the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. The report states that both carers and those cared for (those with disabilities, who are ill or elderly, including those with mental conditions such as substance misuse) are entitled have their needs assessed, regardless of income and finances or their level of need. For carers, Stage 1 of the factsheet provides information on how to get and prepare for a carer's assessment, and how they are assessed. Stage 2 provides information on the eligibility of carers. Stage 3 informs carers about help available for their needs. For those that require support, Stage 1 covers the assessment of the physical, mental and emotional needs of an adult. Stage 2 covers eligibility, and Stage 3 discusses what happens after the needs assessment and what help or advice may be given. Information on the 'Family Approach', for young carers, those transitioning in adulthood, and what happens when you move areas (which affects care and costs of care), are all included in the factsheet.

[Policy briefing: the care certificate](#) (pdf) – The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)

This policy briefing is an outline of the Care Certificate, a standardised formal process which aims to ensure that the healthcare and adult social care workforce has the right values, behaviours, abilities and skills to provide high quality care. As of April 2015, the Care Certificate has been launched for NHS Trusts and Social Care Employers, and this programme will be monitored by the Care Quality Commission to ensure that training, supervision and workplace assessment of the Care Certificate is provided for new workers. The report provides answers to questions including 'who will have to complete the Care Certificate?', 'when and how will the Care Certificate be rolled out?', 'what does the Care Certificate look like?', 'who is responsible for delivering the Care Certificate?' and 'how will the roll-out of the Care Certificate be monitored?'

[National forum on drug-related deaths in Scotland, annual report 2015](#) (pdf) – National Forum on Drug-Related Deaths in Scotland

This report from the National Forum on Drug-Related Deaths highlights the work of the forum over the last year, makes recommendations based on the forum's work for the Scottish Government to help reduce the number of people at risk of drug-related deaths, and details and analyses the latest statistics on drug-related deaths in Scotland, which were featured in [May's policy briefing](#). Finally the report discusses the action taken by the Scottish Government in response to the recommendations that the forum made in 2014. This year's recommendations concern the issues of prescribing in prison, the naloxone programme and broadening out efforts to prevent deaths in situations such as after release from prison or discharge from hospital and the naloxone programme, and heroin assisted treatment and drug consumption rooms.

[The impact of drug policy on women](#) (pdf) – Open Society Foundations

This paper details the impacts on women and young girls through poorly considered policies and inadequate services, which it states put them at a greater disadvantage in comparison to males. Examples provided include the finding that worldwide, women are incarcerated for drug offences more than any other crime and that female injecting drug users have higher HIV prevalence rates than males, but often cannot access treatment. In addition, the report states that the needs and circumstances faced by women are not addressed by services. The effect on women of the overall design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes including childcare and education should be considered within treatment. UN Women emphasise that ‘women’s involvement in drug use and the drug trade reflects the decreased economic opportunities and lower political status that women face in everyday life’. This report also presents the various issues for women from the UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs debate, including ‘women and drug-related criminal justice’, ‘women, drug dependence and drug treatment’, ‘women, hepatitis C and harm reduction’, ‘violence and abuse’, and ‘women and crop eradication’.

[Substance misuse and mental health in prison](#) (pdf) – The Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt)

This briefing discusses the worrying amount of prisoners with mental health problems, and the close correlation between these problems and substance misuse. The Bradley Report, which focussed on people with mental health problems in the criminal justice system, found that over 90% of prisoners had one or more of five psychiatric disorders including hazardous drinking and drug dependence. Highlighted is the limited attention paid to mental health screening on prison entry, which RAPt have sought to address by carrying out mental health screening on all inmates on their treatment programmes since 2006. Results showed that prisoners with drug and alcohol problems tend to have higher levels of mental health problems than the rest of the prison population. RAPt echo the Bradley report’s call for greater integration of mental health and substance misuse services in prisons, and discuss ‘Seeking Safety’, an evidence-based approach which addresses trauma and substance misuse concurrently and has been linked with improvements in wellbeing, depression and relapse.

[Middle aged are the nation’s ‘hidden’ risky drinkers: Drinkaware Monitor survey](#) – Alcohol Research UK

This article from Alcohol Research UK discusses the Drinkaware Monitor, a survey on drinking behaviours and attitudes in the UK, provides the findings of a survey of over 2,000 adult respondents. Areas explored include risk awareness: 72% identified liver disease as a health risk but a large majority of participants failed to identify any others. Also reported was a common misconception amongst middle aged drinkers that they are not at risk of alcohol-related harms because they do not get drunk, and the fact that 83% of regular drinkers who were at risk did not believe that their drinking was having a negative effect on their long-term health. The article discusses these findings in the context of other public health surveys.

[Solutions from the frontline](#) – Making Every Adult Matter

The Making Every Adult Matter coalition (MEAM), a partnership between Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind, have produced this report based on the views of people facing multiple problems including substance misuse, homelessness, mental ill health and offending. The report aims to provide some solutions to the issues identified in their previous publications. One issue identified was the lack of understanding by decision makers and frontline services of the experience of living with multiple needs; to overcome this issue, the report recommends a deeper commitment to listening backed up by new structures, for example a national service user involvement group that reports to ministers. Another issue reported was stigma and discrimination from treatment services and professionals; the solution recommended was that all public services and bodies coming into contact with people with multiple needs should review their training for practitioners. Other recommendations include the extension of work and volunteering opportunities for people with experience of multiple needs.

[Ministerial responsibilities in the new Government around multiple needs](#) (pdf) – Making Every Adult Matter

This short briefing lists the new Government ministers with responsibilities relevant to substance use, homelessness, mental ill health and offending, from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions.

[Multiple needs in the Conservative Party 2015 General Election Manifesto](#) (pdf) – Making Every Adult Matter

In this partner briefing, the Making Every Adult Matter coalition highlight and summarise the key policy commitments from the Conservative Party election manifesto that are likely to affect people with multiple need. The commitments cover the areas of drug treatment, mental health, the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, prison reform, housing, violence against women and girls, and health and social care funding mechanisms.

Featured issue

[State of caring 2015 \(pdf\)](#) - Carers UK

Carers UK's annual survey collected evidence from over 4,500 respondents on issues affecting carers' lives. This report discusses the findings, and gives an overview of the context of care in the UK. Though the report does not specifically mention drug or alcohol use, it discusses issues relevant to all those who care for a loved one in need of support.

Context

There has been a rise in the number of people that need care and support in the UK, owing to the rapidly ageing population, increased survival rates into adulthood of those born with disabilities and many more surviving previously fatal illnesses. To gain an insight into the lives of carers - which a majority must carry out with little support - a survey for carers was constructed to create a picture of the state of care in the UK, and address areas where changes should be made.

Practical Support

This year, there were 4,500 respondents who provided insight into the lives of carers who practically support older people and those with disabilities and illnesses, representing a total of 10.6 million carers in the UK. Despite recent developments including the Care Act 2014, the survey shows carers feel they receive limited support. 42% said they felt that the amount of care they received from the social services had reduced, and 55% of respondents said that they were worried about the impact that cuts to care will have on services over the next year. Only 27% reported positive experiences of social care services and a third refused services altogether because of quality concerns.

Health and Wellbeing of Carers

Carers reported negative impacts on their health and wellbeing, with 76% detailing their concern about the impact of caring on their health. 61% were worried about the impact of care on their social lives, with many carers experiencing social isolation and loneliness as a result of caring, due to unaffordability of social activities and less time available for friends and family.

Financial Hardship

48% of survey respondents said that they were struggling financially and 60% were unsure about their ability to remain in work. The causes of financial difficulties include carers having to stop working because of the demands of caring, those being cared for also having to stop work, and as found by Carers UK's Caring & Family Finances Inquiry, carers facing higher utilities bills and transport costs.

Priorities for the new Government

Carers UK urge the new parliament to commit to the following four main priorities:

1. To improve financial support by improving the level and structure of Carer's Allowance.
2. To ensure sufficient funding for older and disabled people to get the care they need, affordably.
3. To improve carers' health, and make hospitals and other health settings more carer friendly.
4. To strengthen rights for carers who work and have caring responsibilities, including introducing the right to a period of 5-10 days extra Care Leave for those with caring responsibilities.