

Our free monthly update with the latest comment, reports, resources, policy and parliamentary news on families, drugs and alcohol.

POLICY BRIEFING

January 2016

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Editorial

Happy new year from all at Adfam, if it's not too late to say! Below are details of a few of interesting things the policy and communications team has been working on.

State of the Sector is the drug and alcohol treatment sector's touchstone of evidence and testimony on the health of the treatment our society provides from some of its most vulnerable citizens. Produced for 2014/15 by Adfam, on behalf of [The Recovery Partnership](#), this year's SOS follows two predecessors produced by DrugScope. (Do check out [DrugWise](#) by the way – DrugScope's information-focused successor.)

Whilst some of us may have worried that the survey's acronymic title may have ended up having an additional resonance on account of its more widespread meaning, the picture that emerges is more mixed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a majority of both community and residential services participating in the survey reported a decrease in funding over the last year. The autumn Spending Review set out plans to reduce the size of the public health grant by 3.9% each year for the rest of this Parliament, raising questions about what the future will look like for drug and alcohol services and the people who use them. We'll need next year's State of the Sector to be able to tell if these worries have come to pass.

Offering joined up support to service users with mental health problems continues to be a key concern for many respondents, although some examples of promising local practice and partnerships were shared. What continues to shine through is the ongoing commitment of staff and volunteers despite the challenging conditions many are working in.

The full report will be available in couple of weeks – we'd appreciate your help in making sure it gets in front of all the relevant people.

One of the other things we're really looking forward to is an exciting new project funded by Comic Relief which is focusing on parents who experience domestic abuse from their substance using children. Building on [our research with AVA](#) (pdf) on the same topic from a few years back this project will develop a strand of peer support to help meet this need. We'll be looking for partnerships with family support groups or domestic violence services to get these structures up and running so please do get in touch if it sounds of interest.

Finally, this week at Adfam we have launched, in partnership with relationships research charity OnePlusOne, [our new couples project, Relationship Realities](#). We have produced a 30 minute audio collection of real life stories and practical advice from families affected by drug and alcohol use, please do [listen to the audio online](#) and share it with family members and practitioners.

Oliver Standing
Director of Policy and Communications

Parliamentary roundup

[Lord Mancroft](#) asked what steps are being taken to ensure NHS England and Public Health England provide data detailing access to the new Hepatitis C treatment. Lord Prior replied to say that Public Health England is working with NHS England to ensure a data set is collected to allow this.

[Lord Falconer](#) asked about the quantities and types of drugs found in each prison, and the additional sentences given to those caught. Lord Faulks stated that a zero tolerance approach is taken to drugs in prison, and provided statistics on prison drug seizures.

[Baroness Masham](#) asked what percentage of people in England entering treatment for drug misuse have left treatment drug-free each year since 2010, and what assessment has been made of the impact of reduction in funding to the public health budgets for drug treatment outcomes. Lord Prior replied providing statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System, and emphasised that Public Health England will continue to support Local Authorities to provide effective drug treatment services, citing the robustness of the evidence base.

[Lord Roberts](#) asked whether the NHS recognises alcoholism as a mental health issue. Lord Prior responded, recognising the evidence of link between alcohol misuse and mental ill health.

Consultations

[Charity and Voluntary sector 2015](#) – NAVCA

This is the biggest annual survey of the charity and voluntary sector, being carried out by charities to find out about charities. The information will help to understand the support which charities need to help inform and lobby effectively.

[Effectiveness Bank User Survey 2015](#) – Drug & Alcohol Findings

This consultation asks users of the Effectiveness Bank – the comprehensive collection of research on the effectiveness of drug and alcohol interventions – about their motivations for accessing the bank, and how it can be improved and developed.

[Take part in our study on crowdfunding for charities, social enterprises and community groups](#) – Nesta

Nesta and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations are working together to conduct a short survey which explores charities, social enterprises and community group's awareness, perception and usage of crowdfunding.

The survey will be open until 15 February 2016 and all respondents will have the chance to win a £250 donation to a charity of their choice.

Resources

[Protecting the children](#) (pdf) – Drug & Alcohol Findings

Establishing which child protection interventions work can be difficult but is especially vital because of the potential for interventions without a solid evidence base to cause harm. This comprehensive Findings *Hot Topic* rounds up the evidence base for a variety of important interventions and highlights relevant guidelines. Prominent among the interventions it discusses are the new family drug and alcohol courts, based on the US model. The courts aim to promote engagement in substance use treatment, and have been successful in doing so, as well as leading to cost savings. The first court was piloted in London and more are expected to open across England soon. Also assessed is the Action on Addiction-developed pre-crisis intervention, M-PACT. By the end of the intervention, many families had formed stronger relationships and conflict was reduced.

[Opioids Aware: A resource for patients and healthcare professionals to support prescribing of opioid medicines for pain](#) – funded by Public Health England and hosted by the Faculty of Pain Medicine, Royal College of Anaesthetists

This resource aims to ensure good practice in prescribing opioid medicines, and notes in particular the lack of evidence on the effectiveness of opioids for treating long-term pain. It contains invaluable information for patients prescribed opioid painkillers and their carers, including on the different types of pain, how painkillers work, what doses of opioids should be taken and for how long, and the issue of painkiller addiction.

[‘Legal Highs’ and Novel Psychoactive Substances Resource update](#) (pdf) – Mentor ADEPIS

This briefing paper for schools, teachers and drug prevention workers answers questions arising from new legislative changes around New Psychoactive Substances, explaining the impact of the new laws and what schools need to know. It is expected that the New Psychoactive Substance bill will become law from April 2016. The document also provides information on the types of prevention interventions schools can provide.

[The Health and Wellbeing of Unpaid Carers](#) (pdf) – Tinder Foundation

The Tinder Foundation led this research project into unpaid carers and how digital skills and community support can be better used to support them. It found there are approximately 6.5 million people in the United Kingdom providing unpaid care and most feel undervalued and unsupported. 29% of carers said they had little time to focus on themselves and a further 20% considered themselves to have a mental disorder. Whilst carers are benefiting from digital technology, which allows them to maintain connections, manage banking and do shopping; digital exclusion, with carers missing out on the benefits that technology can provide due to a lack of digital skills or ability to access the internet, is still common and a key issue. Recommendations are made on how to address these concerns, including by promoting the use of digital tools such as online government services, online banking and online forums.

[Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship](#) (pdf) – Home Office

The Serious Crime Act 2015 has been amended to create a new offence for controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships. The offence carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, a fine or both. To constitute an offence, the behaviour on the part of the perpetrator must be repeated or continuous, having a serious effect on the victim. Types of controlling and coercive behaviour include isolation, monitoring, putting the victim down, threats, forcing the victim to partake in criminal activity and financial abuse. The law does not apply if the victim is under 16.

Featured issue

[Changing patterns of substance misuse in adult prisons and service responses: A thematic review](#)

(pdf) – HM Inspectorate of Prisons

This major report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons reviews in detail the extent, patterns and trends of drug use in adult prisons. Chief among the topics discussed is the emergence of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) as the main ‘drugs of choice’ in adult male prisons although it is acknowledged that this is only the latest change in a long history of drug use in prisons. Continued change is expected too, as prisons become more able to combat NPS, other substances and types of use will replace them.

The report is wide-ranging, and as well as assessing the scale and nature of drug use in prisons, it examines current approaches taken to combat the issue, not just by prisons but by organisations including the NHS and drug treatment services too.

Throughout the report, the role of prisoners’ families is judged to be key. There areas of particular relevance to families are addressed:

Prisoners’ families as a source of supply

- Families and friends may, willingly or through coercion, be a source of supply of drugs into prisons. Insufficient use is made of prisoners’ families, friends and prisoner peer supporters to reduce supply and demand for illicit substances.
- Confidential assistance should be available to friends and family members who may be pressured to supply drugs or pay drug debts.
- Prisons should provide education and information for families and visitors about drugs, in particular about the harms associated with synthetic cannabis.

Prisoners’ families as a resource for recovery

- Family and friends are a largely untapped but key resource for recovery and rehabilitation in prisons and post release. Too few prison drug treatment services involve families effectively.
- Targeting families and friends for education and support is essential to improving outcomes for individual prisoners and, where appropriate, the prison should work with families to address prisoners’ drug misuse.
- This could include training them to use the opiate antidote naloxone, which could help to reduce the number of fatal drug overdoses in the community.
- Work should be carried out to develop clear protocols for the involvement of families, where appropriate, in work with individual prisoners to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse.
- Only a few substance misuse services inspected offered any structured family support, which was a wasted opportunity to improve outcomes.

Prisoners’ families as victims of the consequences of drug use

- Work should be carried out to provide and widely advertise a national, independent hotline that enables family members to report and seek assistance with threats related to the supply of illicit drugs.
- Support should also be available to any family member who has concerns about a prisoner’s drug use.