

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

POLICY BRIEFING

March 2016

Contents

[Editorial](#).....

[Parliamentary roundup](#).....

[Consultations](#).....

[Resources](#).....

FEATURED ISSUE

[State of the Sector 2015](#).....

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Editorial

This past month has seen the publication by Adfam, on behalf of the Recovery Partnership, of [State of the Sector 2015](#) – a snapshot of drug and alcohol treatment in England. The chief findings were centred on: funding (a slightly mixed picture but things seem to be getting worse); the delivery of core services (affected detrimentally, unsurprisingly, by those funding changes); the importance of recognising the severe and multiple disadvantage that affects many of our clients; and the passion and innovation that continue to exist in both community and residential services.

One interesting observation arose after presenting its findings to a number of different audiences. We shared the information gathered, and the trends identified, with substance misuse commissioners, practitioners, policy people and even ministers – and each group had its own take, and of course its own level of optimism or pessimism!

It's also interesting to see how widespread the use of the 'State of the Sector' phrase is by infrastructure and second-tier organisations – I'm not sure who coined it but it's certainly got legs! In allied sectors Clinks has recently published [the latest iteration](#) of its research and Carers UK, which does a splendid job of amplifying the voices of carers and campaigning for change on their behalf, is running a [State of Caring survey](#) to inform ongoing big-picture work. You can read the [2015 report](#) to see what their take was last time around.

In other news we have new offers for you our supporters on our [training](#) and [publications](#).

Best wishes,
Oliver Standing

Director of Policy and Communications

Parliamentary roundup

[Jo Stevens MP, Shadow Justice Minister](#) asked what steps the Ministry of Justice is taking to eradicate New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) across the prison estate. Andrew Selous MP replied on behalf of the Ministry of Justice to state that there is a zero tolerance approach to drugs in prisons, and from April 2016 there will be mandatory testing of prisoners for NPS.

[Nick Brown MP](#) asked the Home Secretary about the second-hand harm caused to others by drinking, as detailed in [research by Balance North East](#) (pdf). Karen Bradley MP replied on behalf of the Home Office to note that the government recognises the cost of alcohol-related harm is too high, and stated that the Government would shortly be publishing a new Modern Crime Prevention Strategy featuring action to tackle alcohol related crime and violence.

[Caroline Lucas MP](#) asked what progress Public Health England has made on using data on drug-related deaths to assess the impact of naloxone availability. Jane Ellison MP, Public Health Minister, replied that it is likely to be some time before the impact of availability of naloxone on the numbers of drug-related deaths can be assessed.

Consultations

[State of Caring Survey 2016](#) – Carers UK

Carers UK's State of Caring Survey is for anyone who provides unpaid care for a relative or friend, and is a comprehensive survey assessing the experiences of carers. The survey will help build up an extensive picture of what it's like to be a carer. The survey closes on Friday 15 April 2016.

[‘I'm Worth...’ survey on living with Hep C](#) – Health Unlimited

This survey is for people with experience of Hep C and aims to help others understand their needs. The survey asks about medical history, the impact of hepatitis C on life, feelings about current care situation and any experiences of discrimination and stigma.

Resources

[Better Courts: the financial impact of the London Family Drug and Alcohol Court](#) (pdf) - Centre for Justice Innovation

Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs) specialise in hearing cases where local authorities are applying to remove children from their families due to substance use. The first FDAC was launched in London in 2008, and now serves over 40 families a year. This evaluation from the Centre for Justice Innovation finds the evidence shows that the London FDAC is cost-effective, having generated a saving of £2.30 for every £1 spent, due to fewer children being removed from families, fewer families returning to court, and less substance misuse.

[London Together: Transforming services for the most excluded in the capital](#) - Revolving Doors

This report from Revolving Doors examines the scale of the problem of multiple and complex needs and exclusion in London. They estimate that there are at least 7,000 people experiencing a combination of

substance misuse, offending and homelessness in London each year. There are a further 31,900 experiencing at least two of these needs, and combined, there is a cost to London's public services of at least £760m per year. The report then examines the policy context around systems and services for multiple needs, and suggests six strategic priorities for addressing the issue.

[The Road Ahead: A review of the voluntary sector's operating environment](#) – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Here the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) survey the environment for organisations working in the voluntary sector, examining the forces and trends likely to impact on the sector. Political, economic, social and technological drivers for change are all assessed. The NCVO has also recently published *The Squeezed Middle: Small and medium-sized charities in a changing financial landscape*, a research piece finding small charities have on the whole unstable incomes and are faring worse than large charities, and a changing mix of funding with government grants decreasing significantly.

[At the heart of health: Realising the value of people and communities](#) (pdf) – Nesta

This report looks at the advantages of health and care services taking person- and community-centred approaches, assessing the evidence base for these approaches, explaining what they entail, and detailing how to improve the number of services using them. Research shows that such approaches lead to better outcomes for individuals, services and community, including the potential to reduce social isolation and loneliness, build community capacity and improve employment prospects.

[Club Drug Use Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People](#) (pdf) – Neptune

Neptune discuss the patterns and prevalence of drug use amongst the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) community in this report, before looking at the particular risks and harms experienced by this community, and appropriate treatment responses. It notes growing concern regarding the use of drugs in a high-risk sexual context, often referred to as 'Chemsex'.

Featured issue

[State of the Sector 2015](#) – The Recovery Partnership

On behalf of the Recovery Partnership, Adfam has published the third annual State of the Sector report. The report presents findings on the changes, challenges, and opportunities experienced by providers of drug and alcohol treatment between September 2014 and September 2015. There were 176 usable responses to the online survey of community and residential treatment providers, and telephone interviews with service managers and Chief Executives supplement the survey data.

Funding

Over three times as many community services (40 services or 38%) reported a decrease in funding compared to those reporting an increase (12 services or 11%). Of residential services, six times as many (18 or 58%) reported a decrease in funding compared to those reporting an increase (3 or 10%). A significant proportion from both categories stated 'no change'.

Over half (55%) believe that workers are under greater pressure with increased workloads, and a similar proportion feel that workforce development has suffered (51%) as a result of funding changes. The delivery of core services is also highlighted as an area of concern, with 43% reporting that changes to funding has had negative consequences.

Commissioning cycles and contract length

44% of services had been through tendering or contract re-negotiation in the previous year. Half (49%) expected to go through one of these processes during the year ahead.

Perceptions of the impact of recommissioning vary between participants. 44% of survey respondents believe that services better reflect good practice as a result of recent recommissioning. 40% felt that services better reflect local need as a result of recommissioning or contract renegotiation, although around a fifth (21%) disagree with this.

Multiple and complex need

Around 40% respondents reported that needs related to accommodation are prevalent among their service users, with 60% indicating that the level of housing related need is severe. Needs relating to mental health are ranked as prevalent by roughly 60% respondents, with a similar number reporting that the severity of mental health needs among their service users is high.

A fifth of respondents feel that access to mental health services and housing/ housing support has worsened over the last year – indicating that better joined-up support for people with dual diagnosis and multiple and complex needs is still required.

An annexe to the report which considers the experiences of prison-based drug and alcohol services will be published shortly.