

*This briefing is a fortnightly update on important policy developments relevant to family support and the drug and alcohol sector. It includes comment, data, reports, parliamentary news, policy directions and debate.*

## **POLICY BRIEFING**

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**19 – 30 March 2012**

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# Editorial

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This last fortnight has seen the release of the long awaited [Alcohol Strategy](#) and much of the accompanying public focus has been on the inclusion of minimum pricing and its potential impact on the harms of alcohol. The strategy also includes a number of measures which impact on families, although it could have gone further in discussing the needs of families and children affected by alcohol use.

It does, however, lay out the Government's intention to support those who have the greatest influence on young people's drinking and cites the crucial role of parents. As both [Demos](#) and the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) have discussed, parents and parenting style have a significant impact on alcohol behaviours long into adulthood and should therefore be invested in to prevent later harms. As the strategy states, only 17% of parents have planned conversations with their children about the impact or harms that alcohol can cause; the Government seeks to remedy this by disseminating guidance for parents through a range of generic information resources such as NHS and Mumsnet.

At the recent Reach Out conference in Bristol, Adfam ran a workshop considering the motivations, current systems and future systems needed to support young people and families to make safe choices around alcohol. Many of the participants were surprised to hear that the number of young people who report never having had an alcoholic drink is actually increasing, but agreed with the suggestion that parents' behaviour had a significant impact on young people's alcohol use. It was also very clear from the participants that there should not be an undue focus on young people's behaviour and that local responses should also seek to address the issue of adult binge and dependent alcohol use.

Adfam is currently working to understand the impact of a loved one's alcohol use on the family. Initial findings suggest that the social nature and culture of alcohol impacts on both the family members' ability to recognise the behaviour as an issue, and any attempts to get support. Some family members have explained that if their loved one is not a daily dependent drinker it is very hard to access help, despite the chaos and harms they experience following a 'binge'. This then only adds to the perception that it is not really a problem and that they shouldn't bother services, which can often lead to damaging ongoing consequences.

We welcome the Alcohol Strategy and the opportunity it represents to start a new conversation about alcohol. However, we hope to continue to work with local areas to understand the complex nature of alcohol use and how it affects families specifically.



**Joss Smith**

Director of Policy and Regional Development

# Parliamentary roundup

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Debates and questions have revealed:

- The annual average prison population in 2010 was 84,725. This is the highest figure ever, and is almost double the number from 1992.
- Between January 2008 and March 2012, 18 prison officers were convicted of offences relating to taking drugs into prisons.

The annual budget was also delivered last week. See the [Reports and Announcements](#) section for the NCVO's 'Budget Scorecard', which sets out a voluntary sector response to the budget, including concerns that a cap in personal tax reliefs could have the unintended consequence of discouraging major philanthropic donations.

# Consultations

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## [Family Support and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments](#) – Adfam

Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) will be one of the main guiding documents used by new Health and Wellbeing Boards to decide on local public health priorities and make commissioning decisions. Adfam would like to understand more about how family support services will be affected by JSNAs to ensure the needs of drug and alcohol users and their families are fully recognised. This questionnaire can be filled in even if you do not have any direct experiences of JSNAs - we appreciate anyone completing it to give us as comprehensive a picture as possible.

## [Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Consultation](#) – Department for Education

The Government is consulting on the information which needs to be collected locally and nationally in order to drive improvement in services for vulnerable children. The draft dataset includes fields on the school attendance and educational achievement of Children in Need; hospital admissions of children; the social worker vacancy and turnover rate at local level; the length of time children are classed as 'in need'; and the percentage of child protection plans lasting two years or more.

The consultation is open until **16 April 2012**.

## [Commissioning survey](#) – New Philanthropy Capital

This survey sets out to develop an evidence base about charities' experiences of being commissioned to deliver public services, and how contracts are changing. New Philanthropy Capital aims to use the findings to influence Government and commissioners, and inform the charity sector as a whole. All information provided will be treated strictly anonymously and confidentially.

# Reports and announcements

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*Click on the report titles to access the documents.*

## Drugs, alcohol & families

[The EU Drugs strategy](#) – House of Lords, UK

This report explores what the eight-year long EU Drugs strategy, ending this year, has achieved, and what happens next. It states that the strategy has been useful as a framework within which EU member states can formulate their own national strategies, but also acknowledges that the aims of supply and demand reduction have been too general for policy formation, and so cannot be used again as main objectives for the next strategy. The report therefore recommends that the new strategy focus on areas where the EU can make an impact, including the coordination of the fight against drug trafficking.

[Briefing paper on alcohol pricing policies](#) – Alcohol Concern

This paper summarizes the findings of a report investigating the impacts of policies designed to increase the price of alcoholic drinks. Though the report acknowledges that pricing is just one of many factors which play a part in alcohol misuse, it also shows a clear correlation between the cost of alcohol and harms related to its consumption.

[Deaths from liver disease: Implications for end of life care in England](#)

– National End of Life Care Intelligence Network

This report presents key facts about deaths from liver disease in England, highlighting differences in location and cause of death by age, gender and level of deprivation. Some of the key facts related to liver disease include that it causes approximately 2% of all deaths; the number of people dying from it is increasing; and that alcohol accounts for over a third of liver disease deaths.

[Alcohol Strategy](#) (pdf) – HM Government

This new Alcohol Strategy sets out the Government's proposals to tackle the UK's 'binge drinking culture' and other alcohol-related issues. The strategy includes pledges to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol; consult on a ban on the sale of multi-buy alcohol discount deals; introducing stronger powers for local areas to control the density of licensed premises; and pilot creative

schemes to challenge alcohol-related offending.

[Drugs inquiry: written evidence](#) (pdf) – Home Affairs Select Committee

This document contains all of the submissions (which number almost 200) received by the Home Affairs Select Committee relating to its inquiry into drugs. As well as many individual and anonymous submissions, the document also contains the thoughts of organisations including [Against Violence and Abuse](#), the [UK Drug Policy Commission](#), [Mentor](#), the [National Treatment Agency](#), [Release](#), [Crime Reduction Initiatives](#) (CRI) and [The Alliance](#). Adfam's submission is on page 266.

[The impact of drug treatment on reconviction](#) (pdf) – National Treatment Agency

This new study looks to cross-reference information about drug treatment clients with data on their offending history from the Police National Computer, and therefore show the relationship between the two. The research took over 19,000 people who had a criminal conviction in the two years prior to starting treatment, and followed them afterwards. The overall conclusion of the report is that the greater the successful engagement in treatment, the greater the observed reduction in offending: for example the reduction in convictions for people with a 'successful treatment completion' was double that of the service users who dropped out. However, the report concedes that this relationship is not a simple causal one, and that it is not possible to claim that exposure to treatment alone was the only reason for a reduction in offending.

[After the riots: final report](#) (pdf) - Riots Communities and Victims Panel

This is the final report of the panel set up in the aftermath of the widespread riots in August 2011, whose tasks were to look at the reasons behind the events; assess the engagement of public services before, during and after the riots; and examine how to improve community resilience to stop a repeat of the riots.

A major point of the study is that the apparently assumed link between the previously announced 120,000 'troubled families' programme and the rioters' families is not a convincing one: the report argues that the families involved in the riots have 'characteristics linked with disadvantage' but do not generally reach the thresholds which trigger public service involvement. The 'principles for intervention' for these families – up to half a million of them - outlined in the report are that they should be timely (in particular relation to early intervention) and evidence-based; take a whole family view; be supported by quality systems and data; take an asset-based approach rather than focus on deficits; and widen inclusion of all parties who can support the family, including wider family members and the community.

[The enemy within: 4 million reasons to tackle family conflict and family violence](#) – 4Children

This report highlights the many impacts of domestic violence, including on outcomes for children, and assesses the gaps and limitations in current approaches to domestic abuse. It also shows that while focus have historically been placed on intimate partner violence, there has been a growing and disturbing trend towards violence within other family relationships, including child-on-parent and sibling-on-sibling violence. The report's recommendations include a wider definition of domestic violence which is reflected in a more whole-family approach to service delivery.

[Understanding family and friends care: summary of findings](#) – Family Rights Group

This summary of new research sets out some key facts and characteristics related to kinship carers and the children they are looking after. Findings included that 38% of kinship carers were raising a child with emotional and behavioural problems; 65% had raised stress levels; and 71% rated the support they received from the local authority as poor or very poor. Through a Freedom of Information request the research also found that nearly half of all local authorities do not have a published family and friends care policy, despite this being required by statutory guidance by September 2011. Recommendations based on the survey findings include introducing an amendment to the definition of who is a 'child in need' in the Children Act 1989 to include children being cared for by family members or friends; a period of paid leave from work for new carers; and an exemption from the recently introduced welfare benefits cap.

[Supporting adult family members of people with drug problems in Scotland](#) (pdf)

– UK Drug Policy Commission

This report looks at the extent and nature of support that is available for adult family members affected by a relative's drug problem in Scotland. It illustrates the importance of family members to drug users and their recovery, but also emphasizes acknowledges the lack of support for them in their own right. Suggestions for overcoming barriers in service provision for families include better promotion of evidence, the development of targets and outcome assessment relating to families, and workforce development.

[Drug education information papers](#) – The Drug Education Forum

This series of papers have been produced with the objective of aiding anyone involved in drug education those engaged in practice to address issues that are important to meeting the needs of children and young people. The set of papers comprises *The principles of good drug education*, which sets out the evidence base of evaluated programmes; *The principles for supporting school drug education*, which gives information on how schools can best to involve visitors and external support;

*Beyond the lesson plan*, which illustrates how a school's more general ethos and rules can contribute to protecting children from drug-related harm; *Engaging parents in drug education*; *Learning from life skills programmes*; and finally *Legal Highs*, which examines some of the prevalent myths surrounding these substances and how drug educators can integrate them into drugs education.

**[The Troubled Families programme: financial framework for the payment-by-results scheme](#)** (pdf)

– Department for Communities and Local Government

This document sets out the financial details of the Government's Troubled Families initiative, with particular focus on how these families will be identified and what changes local authorities will need to help them make in order to access Payment by Results funding. The key determinants of a 'troubled family', according to the paper, are involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour; lack of school attendance (e.g. permanent exclusion or a 15% absence rate); and, if combined with either of the first two issues, adults in receipt of out of work benefits. There is a fourth measure for 'local discretion', where local areas can prioritise other issues including domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse.

The money available from Government will be £4,000 per family, and local authorities are expected to cover the rest of the costs themselves. There will be a gradual tapering of Payment by Results funding over the next three years: it will start with an 80-20 split between upfront and PbR funding in 2012/13, but by 2014/15 this will have moved to a 40-60 ratio.

**[A better future for families: the importance of family-based interventions in tackling substance misuse](#)** (pdf) – Addaction

This report calls on the Government to increase the amount of intensive support available for parental substance users, and therefore lessen the impact on their children and decrease the likelihood that they will go on to use drugs and alcohol themselves later in life. As well as Addaction's own 'Breaking the Cycle' programme, which works with parents to address their substance use and how it affects their children, the report also presents learning from Action on Addiction's M-Pact (Moving Parents and Children Together) course, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court and Family Intervention Projects. The recommendations of the report include the delivery of substance use training to all frontline workers who have contact with children; a better framework of data collection to gather more accurate information on the number of children affected by parental substance use; and a greater emphasis at the local level on family-based interventions.

## Your organisation

[NCVO budget 2012 scorecard – how did the charity sector do?](#) (pdf) - NCVO

This National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) scorecard rates several elements in the budget on their use and effectiveness for voluntary organisations. The changes contained in the budget range in their ratings from A to D-: for example the policy change which will allow charities to claim gift aid on donations of £20 or less is rated favourably as A, but the new cap on personal tax relief is graded D- as it may discourage giving. Other parts of the budget rated include the simplification of gift aid administration; an investment of £40m in voluntary sector advice services; and a consultation on the integration of Income tax and National Insurance.

[The Big Society and the voluntary sector](#) – John Woodhouse/House of Commons

This new Parliamentary briefing aims to set out some of the key concepts behind the 'Big Society' idea (community empowerment, opening up public services and social action) and give some more specific information on the role of the voluntary sector, which has given the Big Society a 'qualified' welcome but raised concerns about cuts and independence. The briefing goes on to set out opinion and analysis from a variety of Parliamentary and third sector sources on developments and progress relating to the Big Society, including the Spending Review, the Transition Fund, the Big Society Bank, Prime Ministerial speeches and the Open Public Services white paper.

## Featured issue

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### [The Forgotten Carers: Support for adult family members affected by a relative's drug problems](#) - UK Drug Policy Commission

This report summarizes the key findings and implications of a study exploring the extent and nature of support provided to adult family members affected by a relative's drug problems, bringing together the results of three different pieces of research.

Problematic drug use affects more than just the person abusing drugs: according to the report, 1.4 million adults were significantly affected by a relative's drug use, while the cost of harms they experienced was about £1.8 billion per year. The value of support they provide would cost £747 million per year if it was to be delivered by health and social care providers. The report further discusses national policy and guidance, considering the level of local recognition of needs of the families before evaluating the extent and nature of service responses across the UK and at a local level.

The report describes the extent and nature of support provision for adult family members and carers of people experiencing drug problems, highlighting the gaps and identifying good practice in order to help improve provision. It is illustrated that adults who have a relative struggling with drug problems have been increasingly given more visibility as a group with significant needs, but there is still a lack of clarity in the identification of these families. The lack of routine data sources providing information on numbers affected continues to hamper work done by services to effectively meet the needs of adult family members.

The report therefore highlights a number of strategies to help overcome the challenges identified and improve the provision of support available to families. These include:

1. **Promoting evidence** for what is required and what works.
2. **Improving needs assessment**, and involving family members in this process
3. **Developing targets and outcome assessment** to provide a focus for the evaluation of service provision: this would demonstrate the value of existing support services and help build the evidence base
4. **Promote the issues affecting families and the services supporting them** to address stigma and improve knowledge amongst affected family members
5. **Workforce development**, including training on evidence-based interventions for families
6. **Integrating specialist and generic services** to increase the identification and assessment of adult family members and provide them with access to a full range of services through clear pathways and links.