

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

14 - 25 May 2012

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Editorial

Following my last editorial relating to criminal justice, I started thinking about the specific impact of prison on female offenders and their children. Between 2000 and 2010, the women's prison population increased by 27% to 4,267. Although this is a small percentage of the total prison population (88,179 in England and Wales as of the 2nd December 2011), research suggests that prison impacts disproportionately on women. Women are much more likely to have sole custody of their children, and a period of time in custody can therefore cost them and their children dearly: 17,000 children are currently separated from their mothers by imprisonment, a [PACT report](#) found last year. Researchers found that women in custody often have very poor psychological, physical and social health and account for nearly half of self-harm incidents in jail despite making up just 5% of the prison population. In 2007, a [major review](#) by Baroness Corston concluded that most female prisoners shouldn't be in jail at all, with many having disproportionate and inappropriately severe sentences.

The PACT study found that only 9% of children whose mothers were in prison were living with their fathers, half were in care and the others were assumed to be cared for by kinship carers. It was also revealed that there is no automatic process for tracking who is responsible for the care of the child when their parent is placed in custody, which can lead to some inappropriate caring arrangements. Adfam has called for better support for kinship carers for a long time and argues that information, practical support and training provided for kinship carers lag behind the legislative requirements applied to other foster carers.

At a Children's Society event this week Stephen Twigg, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, argued that the proposed adoption reforms stated in the Government's [An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay](#) may have the unintended consequence of making it a secondary option for kinship carers to provide support and a safe sanctuary to children whose parents cannot care for them appropriately; Grandparents Plus have also [argued recently](#) that focusing on adoption risks downgrading the importance of family and friends care. Although there may well be some families where kinship care is not an appropriate option, for every one child adopted through care there are a further 70 who are looked after by their wider family. Some are concerned that speeding up the adoption process may lead to quick decisions which do not recognise the significant role that grandparents and other kinship carers can play in providing stability to these children's lives.



Joss Smith

Head of Policy and Regional Development

Parliamentary roundup

Average weekly alcohol consumption (units) by gender and socio-economic class (UK, self-reported, 2010):

Socio-economic classification	Men	Women
Managerial and professional	16.8	9.2
Intermediate	15.6	7.2
Routine and manual	15.4	6.2

Average weekly alcohol consumption (units) by gender and age (UK, self-reported, 2010):

Age group	Men	Women
16-24	14.1	8.4
25-44	16.6	8.1
45-64	17.8	8.8
65 and over	12.5	4.6

Home Office spending on alcohol awareness campaigns, 2007-12:

Year	Spend (£)
2007-08	2,900,491
2008-09	3,185,032
2009-10	1,934,891
2010-11	0
2011-12	0

Recorded drug incidents (seizures of drugs and drug paraphernalia) in prisons, 2007-12:

Year	Number of incidents
2007-08	5,582
2008-09	5,451
2009-10	4,962
2010-11	4,204
2011-12	4,638
Total	24,837

Debates and questions have also revealed:

- In September 2010, the most recent date for which figures are available, there were 2,820 ex-servicemen in English and Welsh prisons
- As at August 2011, 583,330 people were in receipt of carer's allowance out of 1,032,790 who were eligible for it. Part of this gap is due to eligible people already being in receipt of a different benefit which overlaps with, or exceeds, the weekly rate of carer's allowance
- Also as at August 2011, there were 197,330 people aged between 50 and 64 in receipt of carer's allowance
- The reoffending rate for prisoners sentenced to less than a year in prison is 56.8%. 'Reoffending rate' refers to crimes committed within a year of release from a sentence from a previous offence
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections will cost an estimated £75 million
- 6,398 charities deregistered from the Charity Commission in 2010, and 7,394 in 2011. As well as those which ceased operating, these numbers may include mergers and incorporations.

Consultations

[Sexual Violence, Survivors' Substance Use and Capacity to Consent: A Survey for Professionals - AVA](#)

This survey from Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) is aimed at any professional who has worked with survivors of drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA). As well as covering experiences of working with this group of people, the survey also covers how this type of assault relates to domestic violence and practitioners' own understanding of how drugs and/or alcohol affect a person's capacity to consent.

The survey is running until the beginning of **July 2012**.

[Sexual Violence, Survivors' Substance Use and Capacity to Consent: A Survey for Survivors - AVA](#)

This AVA survey is for survivors of sexual violence. The findings, as well as a literature review and a survey with practitioners, will be used to produce a report looking at how the law and the criminal justice system in England and Wales interpret the effects of alcohol and/or drugs on an individual's ability to agree to sexual activity by choice ('capacity to consent'). All responses will be treated with total anonymity.

The survey is running until the beginning of **July 2012**.

[Multiple needs and exclusions and the work of Making Every Adult Matter \(MEAM\)](#)

MEAM has been running since 2008 and is a partnership of CLINKS, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind. The aim of the coalition is to change policy and practice to benefit people facing multiple needs and exclusions. This short (five minute) survey is for anyone who has had any involvement with MEAM and will form part of the evaluation of the project's success and future direction.

[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.

[Punishment and Reform: effective community sentences](#) – Ministry of Justice

This consultation seeks opinions on proposals for radical reforms to the way in which sentences are served in the community. ‘Ultimately our goal must be to reduce crime and see fewer victims’, the document states: areas for comment include new plans for Intensive Community Punishment, which includes a significant restriction of liberty backed by electronic monitoring and effective financial penalties; and proposals for every community order to include a punitive element.

The survey is running until **22 July 2012**.

[Punishment and reform: effective probation services](#) – Ministry of Justice

This wide-ranging consultation is aimed at probation professionals, victims, the judiciary, service providers, service users and other stakeholders and presents the Government’s suggestions for reforming the probation service. It wants to ‘ensure probation services are better able to achieve the outcomes in justice that matter to victims and communities: protecting the public, reducing reoffending and ensuring that offenders are properly punished’ and invites comment on these proposals.

The survey is running until **22 July 2012**.

[Social and emotional wellbeing – early years: consultation on the draft guidance](#) – NICE

This draft guidance is aimed at anyone responsible for the social and emotional wellbeing of children under five, including those planning, commissioning and delivering services for these children. It covers areas including the identification of vulnerable children – for example those whose parents have substance use or mental health problems, or who live in households affected by domestic violence – early education and pre- and post-natal home visiting. The draft guidance consists of a set of recommendations regarding the importance of identifying the strengths within a family as well as weaknesses; discussing substance use, mental health and support network issues in pre-natal settings; and establishing agreed pathways and referral routes which define how different services will work together.

The guidance is open for comments until **18 June 2012**. (*Note that only [registered stakeholders](#) can respond to this consultation.*)

Reports and announcements

Click on the report titles to access the documents.

Drugs, alcohol & families

[Antisocial behaviour white paper](#) – Home Office

This white paper, subtitled *Putting victims first*, sets out the Government's plans to reform responses to antisocial behaviour (ASB) by realigning responses towards the needs of victims. Fitting with more general Government trends, the paper focuses on increased localisation of powers, in saying that the famous 'ASBO' rules were too 'one-size fits all' and responses need to be more flexible; simplification of rules, by taking 19 'bloated and confusing' powers and distilling them into 6, more effective ones; and the contribution of the new Police and Crime Commissioners, to be elected this November. The paper also addresses the 'drivers' behind ASB, including problem drinking and troubled families, and sets out related Government initiatives working in these areas.

[Drug strategy 2010: annual review May 2012](#) – Home Office

This update from the Home Office looks the aims of the drug strategy and reiterates them with an indication of progress. The three elements named in the title of the strategy - reducing demand, restricting supply and building recovery – are each considered, with a section also devoted to new psychoactive substances ('legal highs'), which outlines how the Government intends to reduce demand and improve education in schools, through social media and via the FRANK website. The report also mentions 'bolstering the global response' to new psychoactive compounds through partnership with the EU and contributing to the EU drug strategy.

[Clinical Update - Apr/May 2012](#) (pdf) – SMMGP

This update from the Substance Misuse Management in General Practice group covers subjects of interest from April and May in the field. It gives a brief overview of three articles investigating the experimental use of baclofen to treat alcoholism (stating that more research needs to be done into this interesting, but still largely unproven, course of treatment) before exploring a number of other papers on the use of opioids during methadone therapy, identifying intravenous drug users with hepatitis and the effectiveness of brief interventions in reducing alcohol consumption in methadone-maintained patients.

[Safer Future Communities news | Issue 1 | May 2012](#)

[Safer Future Communities](#) is a collaborative project aiming to support the voluntary and community sector to engage with the new Police and Crime Commissioners and the system they will operate in. This newsletter summarises the activities of the project, including useful upcoming events, policy news, funding information and updates from local Safer Future Communities networks.

[Three weeks in November...three years on: Cafcass care application study 2012](#) (pdf) - Cafcass

The most striking elements of this report are arguably the regional breakdown of care applications – which has never been released before, and shows South Tyneside has the highest rate – and the announcement that they have risen 62% since the trial of Peter Connelly’s killers in 2008. Overall, the rise was from 5.8 care applications per 10,000 children in 2007/8 to 9.2 in 2011/12. The report also reveals that parental problems with drug or alcohol misuse (60.9%), mental ill health (51.4%) and domestic abuse (60.1% victim, 40.1% perpetrator) are extremely common factors in care cases, and that these often affected the parents when they were children themselves – that is, there is a high rate of intergenerational transfer.

The report also covers the timeliness of applications, reporting that fewer applications are being judged as ‘too late’ (28.8%, down from 43.9%) and more are being made at an earlier stage of the child’s involvement with services. In 85% of cases, Cafcass Guardians – those appointed to represent the interests of the child in court proceedings – felt there was no alternative to a care application; where there were other options, these usually involved child protection plans, family group conferencing and parenting programmes.

[Booze before babies: Analysis of alcohol industry submissions to the Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Inquiry](#) (pdf) – Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (Australia)

This paper looks at submissions from the drinks industry to an Australian parliamentary inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), concluding that industry bodies made ‘unfounded’ claims about FASD and the effectiveness of interventions to prevent it. In particular, the review finds claims which minimise FASD as an issue and therefore ‘talk down’ the need for action; suggest current industry activities are sufficient to prevent FASD; and make misleading or false claims about the possible impact of health interventions around FASD, including that warning labels which recommend abstinence on alcohol packaging may ‘cause anxiety’ amongst women and make them more likely to terminate their pregnancy. The report is damning in tone, stating that ‘industry submissions...merely act as a vehicle to promote their own, vested interests and oppose or delay effective action’.

[Community Alcohol Networks: A Practitioners Toolkit](#) – Lancashire DAAT

Community Alcohol Networks have been developed in Lancashire by the Trading Standards Alcohol and the police with the aims of: reducing young people's access to alcohol; reducing binge and risky drinking and alcohol fuelled anti-social behavior amongst young people; reducing the incidence of alcohol sales to minors; raising awareness of alcohol related health and social issues amongst young people, parents and the wider community. The toolkit which is designed for practitioners to help facilitate this process is available for download, as is a report on the process.

[The Housing Report Edition 2](#) – The Chartered Institute of Housing, National Housing Federation and Shelter

Using a traffic light system (with red denoting a regression, yellow no change and green some progress), this joint report looks at the progress of the Government against its stated objectives in the housing field. Red lights are awarded to housing supply, overcrowding, homelessness and affordability in the private sector; yellow lights are given to home ownership and home planning; and green lights of progress are given to the areas of empty homes and eviction, repossessions and arrears.

[Progress report: Moving towards a child centred system](#) (pdf) – Professor Eileen Munro

It is just over a year since Professor Munro published her [final, Government-commissioned](#) report on reforming child protection, and this paper follows up to see what progress has been made on its recommendations and themes – including greater local flexibility and a move away from a ‘targets-based’ culture into one predicated on professional judgement and effectiveness of service. The overall tone of the report is positive, but it argues that the pace of change needs to be quicker – and that this may be hampered by ongoing reforms in the police and health services. Munro also calls for ‘more realistic’ expectations as to how well professionals can protect children, as ‘we cannot know for sure what is going to happen in the privacy of family life’ and the belief that ‘some professional must be to blame’ has fostered an overly defensive culture in social work.

[Professor Munro also summarises some of her views in this short YouTube interview.](#)

[Adoption scorecards](#) – Department for Education

This resource from the DfE uses key indicators to show how swiftly children in need of adoption are placed. It focuses on timeliness because this is cited as overwhelmingly important in terms of the impact of any delay on the wellbeing of children. The scorecards are to be used by local authorities to understand their own performance and to compare it to that of other authorities. This creation of this resource was announced in [An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay](#) (published in March) and

will be updated in late 2012 with new data.

It is worth noting that there [was some criticism](#) from the sector of these scorecards when they were released.

[Parenting classes trial - essential evidence-based principles](#) (pdf) – Department for Education

This note gives a brief overview of research that has been conducted into evidence-based parenting classes, and partners the [announcement of the Government's trials](#). It identifies the content of the classes, the attributes of the workforce and the type of delivery approach that is deemed most desirable, giving a list of 18 classes which have been most positively evaluated by the [National Academy of Parenting Research](#) (NAPR). NAPR is a research body which is responsible for running the Commissioning Toolkit, an online database of parenting programmes.

[Delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership](#) – Home Office

This report presents 6 case studies from local areas where policing has had a strongly embedded partnership approach, key elements of which include pooling budgets, joint performance monitoring and strong engagement of the local community. The research examines the processes, facilitators, barriers and impact of such approaches, with a view to how they might be taken up elsewhere. The benefits of the models for local people include increased empowerment through 'resident-led' work, perceived reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour, and improved perceptions of safety; parallel benefits identified for partner agencies include improved efficiency and coordination through reduced duplication, more effective problem solving in collaborative settings, and improved staff fulfilment through the achievement of better results.

[Minimum price for alcohol](#) – Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has announced that a minimum price for alcohol will be implemented at 50p per unit. The figure of 45p was suggested in 2010 and the new, slightly higher amount reflects inflation. Research is cited indicating that in the first year there would be 60 fewer deaths; 1,600 fewer hospital admissions; a total value of harm reduction of £64 million; and around 3,500 fewer crimes. Figures are offered for a few commonly consumed drinks and the impact the new pricing will have on them – whilst most spirits will see no change in pricing, supermarket value and own brands will become more expensive, with the minimum price for a 700ml bottle of 37.5% spirit being £13.13. Cheap white and strong ciders are also likely to be affected, as are crates or boxes of beer or cider sold cheaply. The Government has agreed, however, to a 'sunset clause' which allows for a repeal of the law should it be judged ineffectual after 6 years.

[Local family and friends care policies](#) – Local Authorities/Family Rights Group

Under the Freedom of Information Act and on behalf of the Kinship Care Alliance, The Family Rights Group has written to every Local Authority in the country to establish whether they have published a family and friends care policy, as was mandated by the Department for Education's [Statutory Guidance](#). This web page contains links to all local strategies where they have been published, as well as contact details for the senior managers responsible for them and any further information for kinship carers available in each area. [It has previously been found](#) that five months after the deadline for doing so, nearly half of local authorities were yet to published such a policy.

[Understanding family and friends care: the relationship between need, support and legal status: Carers' experiences](#) – Family Rights Group

This report from the Family Rights Group provides a useful overview of the various features that may be involve with kinship care – such as residence orders (RO), special guardianship orders (SGO), adoption, foster care and more. It also looks at the financial and other support received by children and carers and how this relates to their needs and legal status, as well as the impact that taking on additional caring duties has for carers. The report finishes by making a series of recommendations that could improve life for both children and their carers.

Your organisation

[When charity business models change, your exposure to risk does too: make sure you adapt](#) (pdf) - Ecclesiastical

This research looks at the issue of charities considering or undertaking mergers in order to navigate a more difficult funding environment – £3bn is planned to be cut from voluntary sector budgets over the next 5 years. The report aims, therefore, to illustrate some of the ways in which these charities can minimise the risks they take and adapt successfully –the overall keys to successful collaboration being 'good governance, flexibility and a balanced input from all members'. As well as the main barriers to successful joint working (lack of clarity on shared and individual liability, for example) the report presents information on contract bidding, important risks, social enterprise and Community Interest Company (CIC) models and a variety of case studies. The report was produced by a specialist charity insurer so much of the advice centres on liability issues.

[Code of practice for volunteers](#) – Volunteering England

This code of practice provides a set of guidelines for volunteers on staying safe, aiming to reassure would-be volunteers that volunteering is not inherently risky and is something that anyone can do.

Beginning by stating that ‘volunteering is not a generally risky activity’, it goes on to give seven rules for general good practice which should be followed – these are generally common sense measures which encourage volunteers to think about their situation, how it affects others and to look into what personal or professional insurance may cover in the case of any mishap.

[When the dust settles: the impact of the economic downturn and changing policy and commissioning environment on the Voluntary and Community Sector working in criminal justice](#)

(pdf) – Clinks

Though many VCS organisations working with offenders have made efforts to adapt to a changing policy and funding environment, this report argues that their role has nonetheless been eroded. Through surveying over 100 VCS agencies working with offenders, this report paints a picture of a struggling sector: 55% had made redundancies, over 80% had experienced reduced funding and increased competition, and 77% had dipped into their financial reserves. However, there were more positive reports on the use of skilled volunteers (though the assumption that volunteering is completely free is bemoaned), increased concentration on core services and greater focus on collaboration. The picture remains bleak in relation to Payment by Results (which does ‘not seem to play well’ with the VCS, the report states) and frontline service delivery, with clients reporting that support had been harder to access and of lower quality.

[Report on Drug and Alcohol Recovery Payment by Results \(PbR\) Pilots](#) (pdf) – Gaming Commission

This report from the Gaming Commission (GC) – established by the Department of Health and consisting of a variety of experts, service providers, commissioners and civil servants – sets out to identify any ‘gaming’ opportunities within the Drug and Alcohol Recovery PbR pilot schemes, and recommend how these might be avoided. Gaming refers to the practice of deliberately manipulating statistics outside of agreed rules in order to increase financial gain and is considered unethical.

Risks identified in the report relate to the complexity of the PbR system, which may multiply the opportunities for gaming due to the large variety of outcomes and target groups; ‘cherry picking’ due to tariff setting, whereby certain clients (who may have a large payment attached to them) are rushed through whilst others are ignored; and the system being too blunt to fully capture the complexity of the situation on the one hand, or too complex to be workable and transparent on the other. The report identified three areas of focus to discourage gaming: effectively monitoring data, rigorous auditing processes and the involvement of service users to allow the client’s voice to be heard.

Featured issue

[Real Voices in Volunteering Toolkit](#) - Adfam

Adfam has recently published a toolkit dedicated to supporting volunteers and volunteer managers working with families affected by substance use. As part of the [Drug Sector Partnership](#), Adfam has been carrying out a programme of workforce development and this toolkit marks a major product of this work.

The toolkit is split into two sections. The first covers volunteering and volunteer managing in general terms, without specific reference to drugs, alcohol or families. Topics covered include:

- **Why volunteer?** explores some of the motivating forces that might exist for people who end up volunteering. These may include personal experience, family experience or religious or altruistic reasons.
- **CRB checks** – the ins and outs of CRB checks, and the experiences and troubles people have in going through the process.
- **Benefits** – many volunteers reported confusion over how volunteering affected their benefits entitlements, so the toolkit explains how benefits can be claimed by volunteers and what to watch out for.

The second section covers the specifics of volunteering around families, drugs and alcohol, asking what makes this area different from others. Interesting topics covered include:

- **Self-disclosure** – when is it best as a volunteer to disclose that you were once a service-user? Or is it perhaps sometimes best to never share this information?
- **Criminal records** – some ex-service-users may well have criminal records which will show up when their CRB checks are submitted. The toolkit stresses that this in itself is nothing to be scared of, and that each volunteer must be judged on their attributes and suitability for the job – not for their past actions.
- **Domestic violence** – what is the relationship between domestic violence and substance use? The toolkit explores how this might affect volunteering and the importance of being aware of child and adult protection policies.

The toolkit was created after consultation with both volunteers and volunteer managers, in person and online. Their views were recorded and used throughout the toolkit to inform the content, and other real-life experiences were also captured in case studies which appear throughout the document.

The toolkit concludes with some generic example forms (which are also available as separate downloads) which can be used by volunteer managers to go through the supervision and appraisal processes, as well as a section with links to useful organisations and resources.