

*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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**6 – 17 August 2012**

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# Editorial

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Club drugs and young people have again been in the news. A teenage girl tragically died last year after taking ecstasy found in at a house party. The story has appeared once more in the media, with suggestions that the resident of the house, who owned the drugs, may face charges of negligence over the incident.

With stories such as this in the press it's understandable that parents (or indeed any family members) might be worried about the drug and alcohol use of their children. Confusingly perhaps for worried parents, recent research has appeared on the substance use of young people which actually indicates that levels of consumptions are going down.

The Home Office [has covered the statistics](#) from the 2011/12 Crime Survey for England and Wales which include questions on the drug and alcohol consumption of young people aged 16 – 24. It makes interesting reading: 19.3% of this age group reported using an illicit drug in the past year, which is the lowest level since measurement began in 1996. Rates of class-A drug use were reported at 6.3% - a fall from 9.2% reported in 1996. Over this same period ecstasy use has decreased from 6.6% to 3.3% and powder cocaine has increased from 1.3% to 4.2%. Cannabis remains the most popular drug for young people.

NatCen Social Research and National Foundation for Educational Research have recently also carried out research into this area - [Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2011](#) (pdf) on behalf of Health and Social Care Information Centre. Of school pupils aged 11-15 it found that 17% had ever taken drugs, which is down from 29% in 2001. The survey found little difference between drug taking by boys and girls, and black pupils were more likely to have tried a drug than white pupils. When asked where they last bought drugs pupils cited clubs as the fourth most popular location after the street, the house of a friend and school.

Any parents who are worried about their children's use of club drugs or legal highs should attend Adfam's [information day](#) on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012 held in London in conjunction with the [Club Drug Clinic](#). If you are a practitioner perhaps you could share the details of the evening with the parents you work with.

**The Adfam Policy Team**

# Parliamentary roundup

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*Parliament is currently in the summer recess and further updates will come in the Autumn.*

# Consultations

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## [Consultation on Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance](#)

This consultation encompasses new versions of three key safeguarding documents: *Working Together to Safeguard Children*; *Managing Individual Cases: The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*; and *Statutory Guidance on Learning and Improvement*. In the wake of the [Munro Review of Child Protection](#), the overall aim of the revisions is to slim down guidance for social workers to facilitate a move away from a culture based on compliance with procedures, performance indicators and paperwork, and into one which stresses the needs of the child and puts professional judgement back at the forefront of practice. The proposed changes therefore aim to restrict guidance to key information on professional duties and accountabilities; increase local flexibility; and change Serious Case Reviews to ensure that lessons are properly learned.

The consultation closes on **4 September 2012**.

## [Arrangements for the inspection of services for children looked after and care leavers](#)

– Ofsted/Care Quality Commission

New inspection arrangements for services for looked after children and care leavers will come into force in April 2013, and this consultation seeks views from both adults and young people about how the new system should work. At present, children's services, adoption services and adult services are all inspected separately and it is proposed that they are inspected as one, and without prior warning. The consultation also asks what inspectors should examine, for example the speed of placements and how children in care are kept in touch with their families.

The consultation is open until **18 September 2012**.

## [Proposals for the joint inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children](#)

– Ofsted

As with the consultation on the care system (above), the main proposal here centres on implementing multi-agency inspections which look at the overall approach to child protection in local areas, rather than assessing single agencies separately; also as above, these inspections will be unannounced. There is also a questionnaire for children and young people to have their say.

The consultation is open until **2 October 2012**.

### [Inspection of residential family centres](#) – Ofsted

This is a consultation document on Ofsted's proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of residential family centres. It seeks the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, family assessment and support, so that the inspection framework takes proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties.

It is particularly for people who have been directly involved with residential family centres: children, parents and those who commission services. Above all, the framework must assure the quality of assessment, care, support and guidance for parents and their children who use residential family centres, and support the continuing improvement of the services provided.

The closing date for the consultation is **9 October 2012**.

### [Substance use and life values](#) – Liverpool John Moores University

Liverpool John Moores University is carrying out a survey on how people who use substances (including alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs) feel in their day-to-day life. The survey includes takes a neutral view on substances, and does not condone use or criticise users. It is completely anonymous, and respondents must be aged 18 years or over to take part. The survey will take around 30-40 minutes to complete, and needs to be completed in one go.

# Reports and announcements

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

## Drugs, alcohol & families

[Payment by results for mental health: position statement](#) (pdf) – Royal College of Psychiatrists

This briefing sets out some background and context to the introduction of Payment by Results (PbR) in mental health services, and explains the Royal College's key views on its design and implementation. Overall, the College is supportive of a move to PbR which 'accurately reflects the resources needed to provide a high-quality mental health service'. Other views stress that the focus of commissioning must be on the quality of service provided; PbR must not impair the safety of patients, staff or the public; mapping the needs of patients and matching them to evidence-based interventions is vital; and PbR is an ongoing process which will take time to perfect and significant changes may need to be made at some point to how mental health patients are grouped.

[Part of the picture: lesbian, gay and bisexual \(LGB\) people's alcohol and drug use in England 2009-11](#) (pdf) – Lesbian and Gay Foundation

The headline findings of this report, which interviewed over 4,000 people, are that LGB people are more likely to use drugs than the general population, across all age groups; problematic patterns of drinking are more common among LGB people; LGB people are more likely to be dependent on substances; and significant barriers exist for LGB people seeking information, advice and support. The report asserts that problematic and dependent drug and alcohol use among LGB people is not widely acknowledged in the substance use field and it is, therefore, something of a 'hidden' problem. The report also contains tabulated data of substances used, and examples of direct quotations from LGB people on their experiences.

[Elephant in the room: responding to alcohol misuse and domestic violence](#) - Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse

This report explores the complex relationship between alcohol misuse and domestic violence. It suggests that research indicates that alcohol misuse is associated with both being a perpetrator and also a victim, with victimisation leading to drink problems. It acknowledges an unwillingness in some services to engage with the relationship for fear of the alcohol being seen as the cause of the violence, and the responsibility of the perpetrator lessened. It calls for more responses to the issue to address both the relationship between alcohol and domestic violence and prevailing attitudes towards this relationship.

### [Calling Time on Sexual Violence and Alcohol: The Facts](#) – Rape Crisis Ireland

This factsheet from Rape Crisis Ireland explores and explodes some dominant attitudes to rape and alcohol. It discusses how some attitudes assume a level of consent from women merely from the fact that they have been drinking and others that the fact a woman has been drinking as somehow constituting a failure on her part to protect herself against rape. It also explores themes of self-blame. The factsheet concludes with a few factors that may contribute towards the perpetuation of some of these ideas.

### [Substance Misuse in Wales, Quarterly Statistics: January - March 2012](#) (pdf) - National Database for Substance Misuse

A Quarterly Release from the Welsh National Database for Substance Misuse has shown that for the period between January and March 2012 there were 7,700 referrals for alcohol and drug misuse. Of these, 57% were for alcohol and 37% for drugs, the final 6% were for no main substance. For those referred due to drug misuse, heroin accounted for 40%, cannabis for 23% and cocaine for 9%. As the database is flexible these numbers may change on the release of the data for the next quarter.

### [Beyond violence: Breaking cycles of domestic abuse](#) (pdf) – Centre for Social Justice

This report was created as a result of examining research literature, consultations with those in the field of domestic abuse and the results of original polling in order to establish the prevalence of domestic abuse and convey the message that current methods of dealing with it are not breaking abusive cycles in families. It suggests that one in four women and one in seven men report being abused by their partner or ex and that the cost of all forms of abuse is now at £15.7 billion a year. The report also states that substance misuse is an underplayed explanatory factor in many context of domestic abuse - as in 37% of cases the perpetrator is perceived as under the influence of alcohol, and 19% under the influence of drugs.

Although domestic violence is now widely recognised as a social problem, the report suggests that efforts to solve the problem have been of questionable effectiveness. Proposals that come from the report include: an increase in training for those in relevant bodies that come into contact with victims of domestic abuse; ensuring that victims of domestic abuse are not excluded from Couple Relationship Education; and promoting and commissioning those services that are well evaluated and that can provide evidence of their effectiveness.

### [New hope for trauma sufferers with addictions](#) – National Drug and Alcohol Research Center (NDARC)

This research reports on the work by researchers at the University of New South Wales who undertook a study which set out to determine whether a new form of intervention that treated

both Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and substance dependence would decrease the severity of the symptoms for both elements. Current treatment for those suffering PTSD uses a form of exposure therapy which has been reported as unsuitable for those affected by both PTSD and substance abuse due to an increased risk of relapse. Results showed that the new therapy, Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorders Using Prolonged Exposure (COPE) had no effect on the severity of substance dependence, depression or anxiety, but there was shown to be a significantly greater reduction in PTSD symptom severity.

[Tackling alcohol problems in the night-time economy: guidance for local areas](#) (pdf) – London Drug and Alcohol Policy Forum

This guide outlines some possible schemes that when implemented, could help increase the safety of areas at night-time. The guide suggests that local areas need improved identification of problems defined and a programme of coordinated projects and engagement of relevant agencies, stakeholders and local communities to target the issues that are important locally. A few of the suggestions that the guide puts forward to reach these aims are partnership and co-operation between public services, offering 'on the spot' intervention and increased transport.

[Have you got what it takes? Tackling drugs](#) (pdf) Home Office

These Home Office document provides background to the government's plans to tackle drug use, including the role of Police and Crime Commissioners. It provides information on the Drug Strategy 2010 and on other topics such as work in the EU in stopping drug trafficking. Other common questions are answered about the strategy and the importance of targeting drug users in order to help them is outlined. The aim of the guideline is to help PCCs in creating policies that will target alcohol-drug dependencies in their local area.

[Severe and Multiple Disadvantage- A review of key texts](#) (pdf) - LankellyChase Foundation

This is a summary of key texts that address severe and multiple disadvantages (SMD) such as drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness and severe poverty. The summary highlights SMD as a form of disadvantage that is sometimes neglected from broader analysis. The texts discuss the policy and service delivery relevant to SMD and the Social Exclusion Unit and its links to the issues of severe and multiple disadvantages. The summary concludes by stressing the importance of numerous services working together to target SMD, as well as suggesting that some new best practices need to be established to tackle the issues.

## [Structure of Public Health England](#) – Department Of Health

The Department of Health has created this factsheet to outline the structure and functions of Public Health England (PHE), which is set to become an executive agency of the Department of Health in 2013. Currently, the Chair of the Health Protection Agency, David Heymann has been asked to be the acting Chair of Public Health England and will have the support of the Advisory Board; made up of three non-executive directors and the Chief Executive. This advisory board will be responsible for maintaining the effectiveness of the agency and ensuring that financial and performance targets are met. Working alongside this governing body will be the Leadership Team which will specialise in knowledge and research, and be responsible for the day to day leadership of PHE. A wider executive board will also exist to include scientific and professional expertise to shape decision making.

According to the factsheet, PHE will also distribute some of its national office functions across four regions where they will aid transparency and accountability across the system. Finally, there will be 15 centres around the country to provide local presence and leadership. These will be able to develop relationships with local authorities and provide services and support for health protection. These centers will also aim to act as a single point of access for PHE's skills and knowledge and to offer support and advice to local NHS services.

## Your organisation

### [Current use, future trends and opportunities in public sector social media](#) – Cogitamus for the NHS Federation

This report compiles the results of online surveys and one-to-one interviews with social market practitioners with the aim of understanding how social media is being used in the health sector. Results from the practitioners suggest that the social media revolution is both permanent and significant as it has changed the way organizations interact with their members. Because of this, they suggest that it needs to be embraced as impacting on the entirety of operations and that organisations need to move from broadcasting to being communitarians with new skills and attitudes that reflect the new social media. They suggest that social media can be used to tap into communities that already exist and that within organizations it can provide a useful and positive approach to conversations. The online survey also found that 94% of respondents said that Twitter was used for corporate purposes.

## Featured issue

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### [Localism: threat or opportunity? Perspectives on the Localism Act for union and community organisers and activists](#) (pdf) – TUC

In November 2011 the Localism Act was passed with the intent from Government of putting the power back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. The TUC have compiled a report consisting of essays from various voluntary sector groups with a range of opinions on the Localism Act, three of which are summarised below. Despite holding different views, a unanimous worry was found - that a consumer-led approach within the 'big society' may lead to inequality between and within communities. It is also noted that, whilst there are certainly some worries surrounding the Act, it does offer new powers which can help to build upon community action.

#### **What does the Community Right to Challenge mean for the local VCS?**

Neil Cleevey from the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) believes that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) is important in connecting communities to the state and delivering services to the most vulnerable and excluded. The paper suggests ministers believe that the newly established Right to Challenge, whereby local organisations can challenge to take control of a service provided by their local authorities, is a key way of seeing the power transfer from the central state down to communities. However, the author suggests it is also 'more likely to lead to more big contracts being hoovered up by big national players'.

#### **The devil that is commissioning**

Writing for the National Coalition for Independent Action, Andy Benson suggests that the Right to Challenge is further promoting the privatisation of the public services. He questions whether it is appropriate for local groups to run public services, suggesting that they are more effective in demanding accountability and putting pressure on the government to improve service provision. Within the Right to Challenge, the government have removed the need for bidders to have local connections, opening up the door for national charities. Benson argues that taking voluntary organisations from their aim of addressing the needs of others to competing within a market for commissioning will mean that they are part of the voluntary sector in name only.

#### **Local communities, diverse voices**

Vicki Butler, Public Affairs Manager for Runnymede Trust writes about the effect of the Localism Act upon black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and suggests that it could result in services better tailored towards ethnic minority communities. However, due to the lower participation rates that are seen amongst BME groups, localism could provide more risk than it does opportunity as it could lead to popularism where only the majority view is reflected. Unless participation is increased amongst BME groups, localism could have a negative impact upon local minority groups.

Other essays including 'Is a social house a home?' and 'All things being equal: Equality and the Localism Act' are also covered within the report.