

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

26 July – 6 August 2010

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Editorial

The landscape feels like it is changing very quickly at the moment and the pace of change can be difficult to follow. After the last briefing and the media coverage that surrounded the National Treatment Agency's draft business plan, it has now been announced that the NTA will be abolished and its core functions transferred to the newly created Public Health Service (PHS) in April 2012. The development has been widely welcomed both by the NTA and other key sector partners. Over recent years the NTA has made significant improvements in drug treatment and in promoting the needs of families. We hope that in the move to the PHS, with its broad remit and wide responsibilities, the needs of families will be increasingly promoted and recognised. As Adfam has argued in the past, the needs of families touch a number of policy agendas and therefore cannot be met just by the drug and alcohol treatment sector. Health, housing, employment and the criminal justice system all need to work effectively together to support families affected by drugs and alcohol to achieve real recovery for all family members. Hopefully the PHS will be able to achieve this efficiently and effectively.

The needs of families do not just sit within the drug and alcohol field and we need to widen our focus to other developments and initiatives. The government announced this fortnight that they will be refreshing the National Carers Strategy, within which families affected by drugs and alcohol are covered. We think it is vital that the new action plan reflects the priorities of carers of substance users and that there is full recognition of their distinct needs. Adfam will be submitting a full response to this consultation and would welcome and encourage your input to ensure we reflect the views of practitioners and carers themselves. There is a brief response form which you can [fill in online](#). We will collate and submit our response before the deadline in September.

The Home Office has also announced the crime and policing reform consultation, Policing in the 21st Century. There is a focus on the need for communities and families to be involved in setting and implementing community safety priorities and building the capacity for neighbourhoods and communities to support each other. Family support services developed by families themselves, much like Adfam, are a clear example of this community engagement in action and demonstrate the success this model can have. Adfam will be taking this opportunity to promote and raise awareness of the effectiveness and efficiencies of this type of support, and the need for it to continue.



Joss Smith

Head of Policy and Regional Development

Parliamentary roundup

Drug possession in prisons: this table gives details of offences punished, the total number of punishments given and the number of times additional days were given as a punishment for possession of drugs in 2007, 2008 and 2009 in England and Wales:

Year	2007	2008	2009
Number of offences	1,292	1,074	1,048
Number of punishments	2,154	1,788	1,698
Of which additional days given	422	351	415

Debates and questions also revealed:

- The British crime survey report “Drug Misuse Declared 2009/10”, published July 2010, for the first time includes estimates of khat use. It shows that 0.2% of adults reported using khat in the last year.

Please note that **Parliament has recently entered its summer recess**. There is therefore not a lot of activity to report until it returns on September 6th.

Consultations

[The Childhood and Families Taskforce consultation](#) – Adfam

The coalition government has launched a Childhood and Families Taskforce to consider the problems facing modern families. It is anticipated to cover family breakdown, childhood obesity, parental leave, support for disabled children, mental illness in young people and more. [Adfam](#) is planning to make a submission to the taskforce and would like you to contribute to it. Our consultation outlines the policy priorities of Adfam's manifesto and gives opportunities for you to give comments on what you think needs to go into our submission. This consultation will be open until August 20th - [input to the submission](#).

[Refreshing the National Carers Strategy](#) – Adfam

The coalition government is currently [running a consultation](#) aimed at refreshing the previous government's strategy 'Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities'. It wishes to produce a plan of work for 2011-15 which outlines priorities of work for the government in partnership with carers, local authorities, the NHS and others. [Adfam](#) is going to make a submission to the [Department of Health](#) explaining the priorities of families affected by drug and alcohol use and would value your input. If you would like to give your views on improving support for carers please [submit to our consultation](#). This will be open until September 6th.

[Rebalancing the Licensing Act](#) – Home Office

This [Home Office](#) consultation offers the chance for interested individuals to provide feedback on the government's plans to revise the current Licensing Act. Figures from the year 2009/10 show that nearly half of all violent crimes are alcohol-related and there are 6.6 million alcohol-related admissions to hospital every year, at great cost to the NHS. The government would therefore like to give more power to police and local authorities to remove drinking licenses from premises causing problems, shut down places that repeatedly sell alcohol to children and charge more for late drinking licenses. There is an [online form](#) which can be used to make a submission and you can also download the whole [consultation document](#). It is closing on 8 September 2010.

[Grandparent Carers event](#) – Adfam and Grandparents Plus

On Monday September 13th 2010, a joint event between Adfam's Grandparent Carers Project and [Grandparents Plus](#) will be held in London. It is open to both grandparents and the professionals that work with them and will be a great opportunity for grandparent carers to meet each other,

network and share their experiences. There will be workshops, speakers and a lunch and the event will run from 10:30am to 2:30pm.

If you would like to attend please email [Vicky Brooks](#) for further details and venue information.

[Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people](#) - Home Office

As part of the Government's drive to decentralise power and make local communities more involved in decision making, this consultation centres on four key areas: increasing democratic accountability; removing bureaucratic accountability; a national framework for efficient local policing; and tackling crime together. One of the main Conservative plans in this area is to introduce directly elected police commissioners, and this is included in the consultation.

Questions concern areas such as how to ensure candidates for Commissioner come from a range of backgrounds; how to share knowledge about successful crime-cutting measures without producing endless guidance documents; how to take advantage of private sector expertise; and what more the Government can do encourage volunteering and support the public to take a more active role in keeping their communities safe.

Reports and announcements

Click on the report titles to access the documents.

[Drugs and Diversity: The Impact of Drugs on Different Minority Groups](#) - UK Drug Policy Commission

This series of reports covers drug treatment and prevention in various minority communities. It aims to look at the needs and challenges of drug problems in LGBT, BME and disabled communities and how successful mainstream services are in meeting their needs. The information is presented as both compact briefing papers and full research papers.

The series of reports suggests that services are currently not fully meeting the needs of these people and suggests what practitioners and commissioners can do to rectify this. It also outlines wider challenges facing the criminal justice sector and the drug policy agenda in general.

[Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England](#) (pdf) – NHS Information Centre

These 2009 figures look not only at prevalence figures and how widespread substance use is among school-age children, but also reasons for use and issues of attitude, environment and education.

For instance, only 18% of pupils found telephone helplines a helpful source of information on drugs, whereas 63% said parents and teachers were useful. Boys were more likely than girls to list family members as useful sources of information about drugs; girls were more likely to find newspapers and magazines helpful. Pupils who had truanted or been excluded from school in the last year were also 12 times more likely to have taken class A drugs than pupils who had not been excluded or played truant.

Regarding family attitudes, 92% of pupils who thought their parents would stop them taking drugs had never taken drugs, or not taken them in the last year; this dropped to 28% of pupils whose parents took the lenient approach of not doing anything or encouraging them. Also, pupils who had taken drugs but not in the last month were more likely to list parents as a good source of information, and pupils who had taken drugs recently were more likely to mention friends and [FRANK](#).

[Drug Interventions Programme \(DIP\) London Review – Executive Summary](#) (pdf) – independent consultants

This report examines the delivery of the DIP in London and is written by consultants Green & Green Solutions. Starting with desktop research, the review moved onto interviews with key people in DIP delivery and surveys and workshops in the boroughs with DIPs. The findings of the report are broken down into 12 sections, each with its own suggestion for policy makers and government.

The findings are designated either strategic or operational. The strategic ones cover London governance, roles of strategic partnerships, local partnership working and police strategic leads and found that generally the work of the DIPs was positive, although it varied between boroughs. The operational findings covered clients, care management and more. They found that lots of good practice does exist but it isn't always spread over all boroughs.

[Heroin Assisted Treatment: The State of Play](#) (pdf) – International Drug Policy Commission

The [International Drug Policy Commission](#) here explores and examines heroin assisted treatment (HAT) for heroin addicts. It considers the evidence that is emerging from treatment and clinical studies around the world and makes suggestions for policy makers. The report gives a brief history of the use of both heroin and substitute opioids such as methadone to treat heroin addiction, from 1960s Britain to Switzerland in the early 1990s. It also explores evidence from recent trials. Although it doesn't mention families specifically, it does provide some interesting background information on the global state of opioids to treat those using heroin.

Featured issue

[Liberating the NHS: Report of the arm's-length bodies review](#) (pdf)

– Department of Health

Following the publication of the white paper [Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS](#) (pdf), which was covered as the featured issue of the last policy briefing, the government has published its review of the arm's-length bodies (ALBs, also known as quangos) in the NHS. It assesses the value for money of the ALBs currently operating against the stated aim of cutting the administrative budget of the NHS by 45% or more. Broadly, the report outlines how the work of existing ALBs can be streamlined, duplication avoided and ALBs which are deemed wholly unnecessary abolished.

[The National Treatment Agency](#) (NTA) will be abolished and its responsibilities transferred to the newly created Public Health Service (PHS). The PHS will be answerable to the Secretary of State and will *'integrate and streamline existing health improvement and protection bodies and functions, with an increased emphasis on research, analysis and evaluation'*. The PHS will support the implementation of cross-government health strategy.

The local delivery of drug treatment services is identified as the current priority of the NTA and a function that will transfer to the PHS. It is hinted that the move to the PHS will entail a broader outlook in drug treatment, with *'the entire range of problems that users face'* mentioned. *'The full recovery of drug users back into society, housing and employment will provide significant benefits to all'*, the report states. It is anticipated that the work of the NTA will start to be moved in April 2012, with some going to the NHS Commissioning Board and some elsewhere. It is not explicit if or when the NHS Commissioning Board will become part of the PHS.

[The Alcohol Education and Research Council](#) (AERC) was established as an executive non-governmental departmental body in 1981 but is deemed by the report to not truly fulfil the functions of an ALB and is to therefore be excluded from the ALB sector of government. It receives no money from the DH but administers an £8m grant as a charitable body so will continue to exist. The report states that government will continue to work cooperatively with the AERC who will be expected to *'contribute to the development of the evidence base for effective policy across Government to reduce harm from alcohol misuse'*.

A fuller plan and explanation of the PHS will be laid out later this year, alongside additional information on exactly how the NTA and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) will be absorbed. The report states that ring-fenced public health funding will be provided to support the delivery of local services. It stresses that both the NTA and the HPA will be worked with closely to ensure a smooth transition of work.

There is no specific mention of families or carers in the report and it is therefore not easy to say exactly what all this means for families affected by drug and alcohol use. It is likely that the work of the NTA will have a new emphasis once moved to the PHS and we will continue to report on any new developments of interest.