**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm**

***Alcohol and domestic abuse***

**Wednesday 10th March 2021, 12:00-13:00**

Jennifer Keen, Head of Policy at Institute of Alcohol Studies

* There is a strong association between domestic abuse and alcohol but it’s not as simple to state alcohol is a cause for domestic abuse
* Research tends to find that in 25-50% of cases, the perpetrator has been drinking at the time of assault
* 60% of perpetrators are found to have alcohol abuse or drug abuse
* Where alcohol is present then the risk of abuse is more severe - leading to increasing rates of rape
* Alcohol abuse affects the individual and families - around 40% of cases where child was killed or injured by the parent due to the abuse of alcohol
* It’s not always the perpetrator who drinks but leads to the victim to start drinking - perpetrator can use alcohol as a way to control the victim e.g. limiting the use of alcohol if they’re addicted
* Women who have endured domestic abuse are twice as likely to have a relationship with alcohol abuse
* A survey found ¼ refuges will support women with alcohol needs - health care services aren’t properly equipped to provide the necessary alcohol abuse treatment to women
* Social economic status - poorest groups face the worst harm. The most deprived groups face 14% more domestic abuse through alcohol abuse than any other group
* With male perpetrators, alcohol use tends to be seen as a mitigating factor but with female victims their drinking can be seen as an aggravating factor. Domestic Abuse Bill will be able to take these complexities into account
* Reducing perpetrating drinking can be useful through pricing, limitations of alcohol and increasing alcohol abuse treatment

Baroness Finlay - Q&A on the Domestic Abuse Bill

* Alcohol abuse related domestic abuse is more fatal as it can include children in this
* Need to wait and see what the debate on the bill says today
* Beginning to push forward changes that have not been put forward before
* Baroness Masham has personally seen 3 women who died of alcohol and drug use but two of the women had alcoholic parents growing up - generation problem is a massive issue and govt policy needs to look at preventing this issue BEFORE it gets too serious and potentially too late
* With COVID there has been more drinking at home leading to more domestic abuse, but Baroness Finlay has stated there is no direct link to confirm this
* Baroness Watkins - also need to make the point of alcohol containing a lot of calories and linking this to the govt obesity issue
* Diane Goslar as a recovering alcoholic it’s been difficult to remain sober during lockdown. All the usual escape routes have been blocked so drinking becomes more tempting. Alcohol is a huge problem and govt should listen to people who lived through the experience to gain insight on improving this issue
* There’s been an increase in zoom meetings across the world - this technology could be used to create a positive group to help those recovering especially those who are uncomfortable with going into a room full of people
* We’ll only be able to see the extent of how bad domestic abuse has become during lockdown until the victims go to seek help which could be around August/September

Andy Ryan, Head of Recovery and Addiction Services at Changing Lives

* During COVID - data suggests across England there has been a decline in accessing drug and alcohol treatment providing by local authorities even though drinking has been doubled
* Treatment delivery partners expected a rapid increase of providing treatment and support considering it has been a stressful year
* Approximately 10.4 million people drinking alcohol according to Public Health England
* Treatment had to be online during COVID - this affected the relationship as coming into the office provides a closer relationship and makes them feel comfortable. Speaking about their issues in a space where they could be abusing alcohol may make them feel uncomfortable and less likely to talk
* As lockdown was slightly lifted referrals of treatment did go up so we could see a rapid increase from June onwards.
* Drug and alcohol treatment are long term therapeutic support. Can dwell into what caused them to turn to alcohol in the first place
* People could be using alcohol has a means of regulating mental health
* The reality is the treatment system is there to support perpetrators and victims but trying to merge this all into one isn’t ideal.
* The services need to be adapted on how they provide support in domestic abuse cases
* Needs to be a review around commissioning, we need gender-specific pathways in treatment
* There is a workforce and training crisis

Jacqueline Cox, Area Manager for Changing Lives’ North East Addiction Treatment services

* Services need to be easier for a women's path only in terms of providing support à it’s too rigid currently and is impacting women more
Women who are suffering from domestic abuse can find it difficult to speak over Teams/Zoom when the perpetrator is in the same building/room as them.

Maithreyi Rajeshkumar, Policy Manager at Agenda

* Over 100 organisations in their alliance to help women and girls
* Treatment services are often focused on perpetrators’ substance use, survivors’ use often overlooked
* Important to highlight domestic abuse as well as other abuses such as sexual abuse - cannot separate these links. Women who have suffered domestic abuse AND sexual abuse are three times more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
* Women suffering from abuse will encounter criminal justice system - stealing for their perpetrators
* Case study of a young woman who experienced domestic abuse as a child and went into care and entered many abusive relationships during her life. Her partner had her addicted to many substances and had beat her up severely that she called the police. She then suffered homelessness and other issues.
* Specialist treatment and support - black and minority women say the spaces aren’t for them hence they tend not to go. They experience racism and stigma within their own community.
* Having mixed gender spaces isn’t always safe for women - they can see a perpetrator there, experience sexual abuse, worried about their children being taken away
* The Domestic Abuse Bill statutory guidance: want to include a requirement for statutory services to train staff on domestic abuse as women often come into first contact with these services