

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE MISUSE OF DRUGS (ACMD)

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Press Release

Hidden Harm - Three Years On: Realities, Challenges and Opportunities **9 February 2007**

This new report published today provides an update and overview of the progress made in implementing the 48 recommendations made in the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) report ***Hidden Harm – responding to the needs of children of problem drug users***, published in 2003.

The report has been compiled by the ACMD's Hidden Harm Working Group -the first such Group set up by the Council to explicitly monitor and advise on implementation of recommendations made in one of its reports.

The report describes and comments on how local authorities and services have responded to the recommendations of the original ***Hidden Harm*** report. It also provides practice examples and information about implementation, together with key learning for the future.

It is hoped that the report will be read by Ministers and officials in UK government departments and by local 'Hidden Harm champions' including managers and practitioners in relevant fields, i.e. children's services, maternity services and drugs services.

Key points include:

- **Clear leadership at all levels and cross-sector co-ordination** produces the most significant progress in responding to the needs of children born to and living with parental substance misuse.
- Greatest progress is being made where the needs of children of problem drug and alcohol users are identified and addressed by a **shared strategic approach** at national, regional and local level
- **Specific objectives and targets** to safeguard and promote the welfare and protection of children of problem drug (and alcohol) users should be incorporated into the new **drugs (and alcohol) strategies** in England, Scotland and Wales from 2008.

- This report is not a **good practice guide**. However, there is evidence that such a publication would be extremely valuable for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, building on the model of **Getting Our Priorities Right** in Scotland, and drawing on information made available to the ACMD for this report.
- **Dedicated services** are required at local level for the children of drug users, with guaranteed ongoing funding.
- The good practice in working with **pregnant drug users** identified in the original **Hidden Harm** report have been sustained and spread across much of the UK
- There is a need for large-scale **training and workforce development**, for both children's and adult services to help them deal appropriately with these children.
- Services can address **parental alcohol misuse** effectively alongside parental problem drug use.

Notes to editors

1. The report "Hidden Harm - Three Years On: Realities, Challenges and Opportunities" will be available on www.drugs.gov.uk from 9:30 am on Friday 9th February 2007. For media enquiries please call Stephen Carter on 020 7035 3801

2. The ACMD is established under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to keep under review the drug situation in the United Kingdom and to advise Government Ministers on measures that they feel should be taken for preventing the misuse of drugs or for dealing with the social problems connected with their misuse. They publish highly influential reports.

3. This report was produced by the Implementation Working Group, a sub-group of the ACMD, chaired by Vivienne Evans, ACMD member and Chief Executive of Adfam.

4. Sir Michael Rawlins, Chair of the ACMD and Viv Evans, Chair of the Hidden Harm Working Group are available for interview. All requests to Stephen Carter 020 7035 3801.