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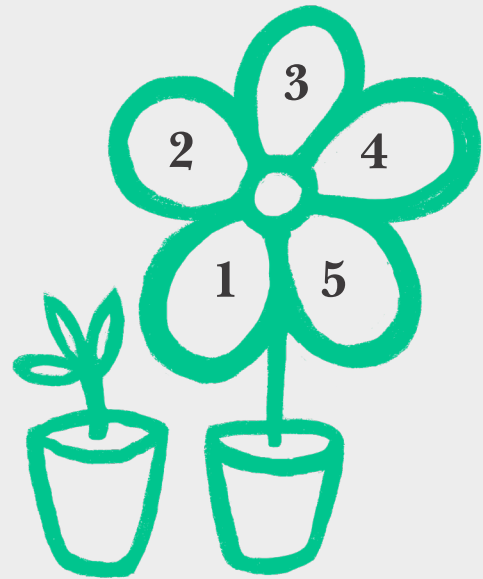
CollectiveVoice

The National Alliance of Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Charities

From Hope to Delivery: Five essential next steps for Government action on alcohol and other drugs

Problematic use of alcohol and other drugs destroys lives and places considerable pressure on public services and society. The need for action on this fatal issue has never been more urgent. We are seeing the highest rates of drug-related deaths ever recorded, and with the emergence of synthetic opioids in the UK, the National Crime Agency has stated that ‘there has never been a more dangerous time to take drugs’.

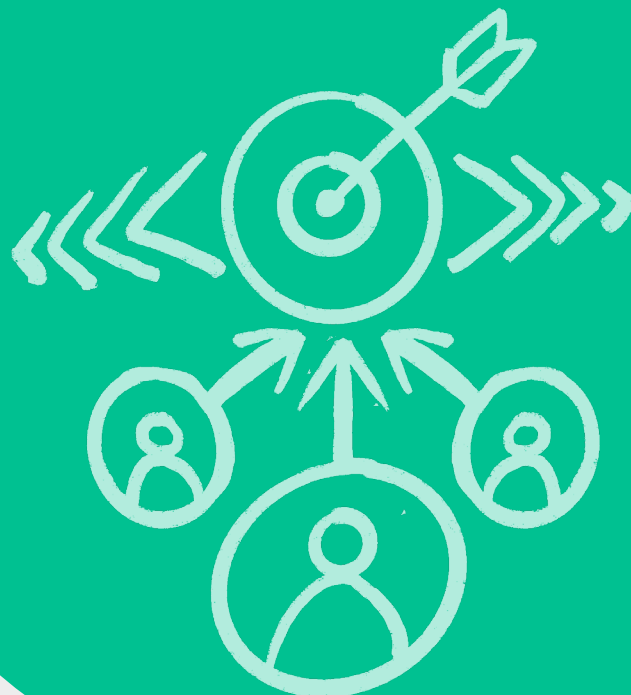
Fortunately, we know that substance use treatment works to reduce harm and help people turn their lives around, delivering a good return on investment for public services and communities. Every £1 invested in drug treatment is estimated to yield a £4 return on investment.



However, over a year into the Government’s tenure, there remains a lack of clarity in how they plan to address deaths and harm related to alcohol and other drugs.

As Dame Carol Black explained in her 2021 independent review, ‘Government faces an unavoidable choice: invest in tackling the problem or keep paying for the consequences.’ This is an urgent call for the current Government to make the right choice and tackle the problems related to alcohol and other drugs head on. In the spirit of focusing on delivery, as the Prime Minister has advocated, we set out here five clear actions on drug and alcohol treatment that the Government should take without delay.

1



The Government should publish a position statement on drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services to reaffirm their commitment to reduce deaths and crime linked to alcohol and other drugs, and maximise recovery.

The statement should articulate clear and shared objectives for all relevant departments and organisations to demonstrate a collective ambition for the nation's treatment and recovery services. There should be a dedicated Minister to lead on the strategy, and clear inter-departmental governance as recommended by Dame Carol Black.

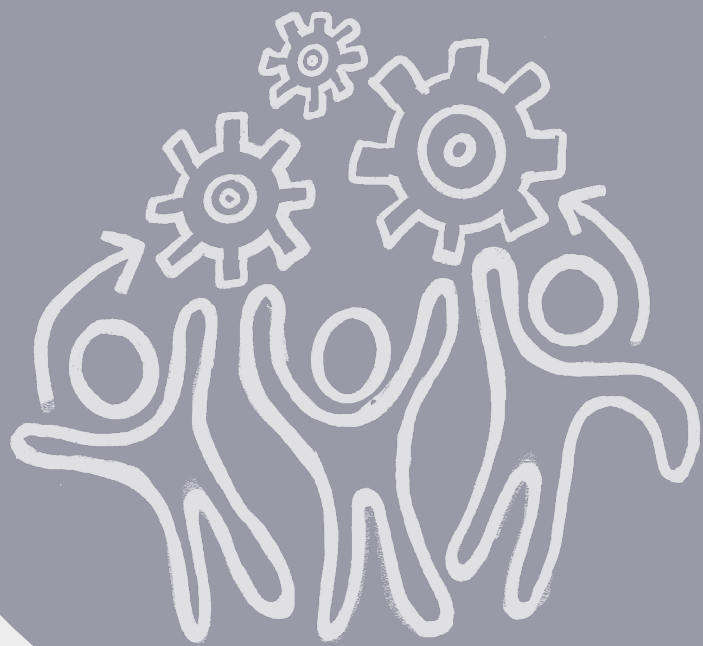
2



To achieve a world class treatment system the Government must restore the 5-year programme of investment recommended by Dame Carol Black. This funding must be ringfenced and protected against inflation and other cost pressures.

The evidence clearly shows this will provide a strong return on investment, saving lives and reducing crime, thereby reducing pressure on the NHS, the criminal justice system and wider public services, including social care.

3



Residential treatment must be an accessible option in every part of the country, in line with published evidence and Government guidance. The current system of funding and procurement isn't working – it's an inefficient postcode lottery.

But we have a clear blueprint laid out by Dame Carol Black in her independent review: regional or sub-regional commissioning. The Government should urgently convene an expert working group, bringing together commissioners, residential and community providers and people with lived and living experience to develop an agreed approach that ensures the accessibility and sustainability of this evidence-based treatment intervention.

4



The Government should commission substance use treatment and recovery services in prison directly with the provider, separately from other health services, through a partnership including local authorities and prison governors, ensuring appropriate pathways are in place from prisons to both community and residential treatment and recovery services.

This has been clearly recommended by both Dame Carol Black in a recent review and the Justice Select Committee's 2025 report into drugs in prisons.

5



The Government should develop a detailed and fully-resourced plan to deliver the recommendations of the Independent Sentencing Review.


This must be developed in collaboration with the third sector and others to ensure more people who need support with their substance use can be treated in the community rather than being sent to prison. This will require a modest investment that will provide rapid and sustained returns in reducing reoffending, and lessen future pressure on prison capacity.

CollectiveVoice

The National Alliance of Drug and Alcohol
Treatment and Recovery Charities

Collective Voice is the alliance of charities that provide drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services across England. We believe that anyone with a drug or alcohol problem should be able to access effective, evidence-based and person-centred support. We know that treatment and wider support have a transformative power for people with alcohol or other drug issues, their families, and communities. Charities play a key role in providing this support. Collective Voice seeks to ensure that the knowledge and expertise of our field contributes to the development of policy and practice.

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