

National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy: Consultation Document

BARNARDO'S RESPONSE

(1) Barnardo's

Barnardo's is one of the largest UK child-care charities, working with 55,000 children, young people and their families. We provide a variety of services including day-care, health education and advice, support for children and young people with disability, the homeless and substance (including alcohol) abusers.

Barnardo's response to this consultation document is based on our concerns about:

- Young people who abuse or are at risk of abusing alcohol;
- Parental abuse of alcohol, the ways in which this may effect the ability to parent successfully, and associated child protection concerns.

(2) The Key Message

Barnardo's believes that the areas of enquiry outlined on page five of the consultation document should be expanded to include a dedicated section on Children, Young People and their Families.

(3) Context

Where drug abuse has received a great deal of attention and debate in recent years, the detrimental effects of alcohol have remained largely unaddressed, though the lives of children and young people are profoundly affected by its (mis)use.

Alcohol abuse is directly related to violent crimes against the person. It is the commonest form of substance abuse. It is associated with 80% of incidents of domestic violence. It is strongly associated with homelessness, mental ill health and family breakdown. Alcohol affects mental and physical well-being, and its long-term abuse can KILL.

It is, nevertheless, the drug of choice for most of us, who, largely speaking, do not look for, or will not see the tragic consequences alcohol abuse can have on the lives of individual abusers and those close to them.

(4) Our Response

Barnardo's commends the development of a National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. However, we believe that the Consultation Document fails to acknowledge the importance of children and young people generally, and of some particularly vulnerable sub-sets in particular. Whilst the document recognises the need to respond to children and young people it is consistently within the context of other considerations. Barnardo's believes that the interests of children and young people are best served when considered within the context of their needs. We do not accept that these will be adequately addressed within a generic grouping of '*Vulnerable Groups, including children*'.

Barnardo's also believes that a National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy must address not only immediate, empirical concerns, but must also develop a longer-term preventive strategy. Engaging with children and young people will be critical to the development of such a long-term strategy and to its successful delivery.

(5) Conclusion

Barnardo's welcomes the opportunity to comment on the initial consultation stage of the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. We hope that the strategy committee will respond to our **key message**, and include **a dedicated section on Children, Young People and Their Families**.

We understand that this completes the first stage of a consultation process leading to the publication of an interim analytical report on which further comment will be invited. We look forward to submitting a more detailed commentary at this stage.

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Barnardo's