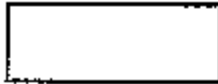


fawcett



16th January 2003

SU/DoH Consultation
Room 4.6
Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

Please find attached the Fawcett Society's response to *National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy* consultation document.

Fawcett welcomes the Government's commitment to developing strategies for dealing with problems associated with alcohol misuse. The effectiveness of the Strategy will largely depend on how it responds to the needs of women such as offenders and victims of violence who experience major problems with alcohol misuse. In this regard, we have outlined issues on women's alcohol consumption, which we would like the Department of Health to consider.

Should you need more information please contact Mamusa Siyunyi-Siluwe on Mamusa@fawcettsociety.org.uk or telephone 020 7253 2598.

Yours sincerely

Dr Katherine Rake
Director

been as developed. As a result most female offenders with alcohol problems have not received help with detoxification or education.

- 2.5 There is a marked correlation between alcohol consumption and women's victimisation. Women who report being sexually abused in childhood are usually more likely than other women to experience alcohol related problems. Also, women who experience violence in adulthood especial from their partners tend to turn to alcohol abuse.
- 2.6 Violence and abuse is common amongst women involved in relationships with a partner abusing alcohol. Studies have found that for a large proportion of domestic violence cases the offenders were reported to be under the influence of the alcohol.
- 2.7 Generally, the country has seen an upsurge of violence against women and alcohol has been identified as a risk factor. According to the Institute of Alcohol Studies, alcohol has been linked to the incidence of sexual assault and rape with studies estimating that 52 per cent of men convicted of these offences had been drinking alcohol prior to the attack. A number of victims of sexual or physical assault are themselves under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime.
- 2.8 There is a close relationship between alcohol dependency and mental health problems. Research suggests that women with alcohol problems usually have mental health problems including depression, phobic and panic disorder, self-harm and feeling suicidal.

3. Recommendations

In view of the above, Fawcett recommends that gender specific intervention should form an integral part of the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

- 3.1 The national strategy should include female offenders and women who are victims of violence as groups that are most at risk of alcohol abuse.
- 3.2 Intervention must target various groups of women at risk of mental ill health including female offenders and victims of domestic violence.
- 3.3 It is critical to ensure that alcohol treatment and mental health services are effectively linked. Co-ordination of agencies should be supported by comprehensive role accountability mechanisms and improved communication to ensure a clear understanding of joint-working amongst staff.
- 3.4 There is need for a comprehensive analysis of existing services for alcohol harm reduction and what works. Information should be obtained on what interventions different groups of women with alcohol problems find effective including women who are indirectly affected due to drinking of their partners.
- 3.5 Alcohol therapy services should be flexible and responsive to women's needs such childcare and promotion of self-esteem and empowerment.