

National Association for People Abused in Childhood. A registered charity.
No.1069802

Dear Sirs

Please excuse the very late contribution to this important consultation document but our charity only became aware of it at the weekend.

There sadly is not time to give due consideration to all the points raised within it but I would like to point out a few facts that we observe as the UKs only national charity dedicated to supporting adult survivors of child abuse.

A great many of the people who make contact with NAPAC report either an addiction to alcohol or at best an inability to get through life without a 'crutch' of some kind and more often than not this appears to be drink. Indeed if you were to ask people who attend AA meetings you may discover that many who drink do so to numb the painful memories of an abusive childhood.

May I stress that not all adult survivors of abuse become drinkers but it seems that a significant number do - and indeed many also self-harm in other ways.

This may appear simplistic but as a charity we say time and again, the social, economic and financial consequences of child abuse are enormous and alcohol is one of the symptoms. It is the 'causes' that need to be tackled every bit as much as the consequences.

Many who contact us also report that alcohol was associated with the abuse they suffered whether it be a drunken, violent parent or carer or someone who used alcohol as a disinhibitor for sexual abuse.

It also seems that quite a number of children are introduced to alcohol by their abusers as a means of manipulating their victim (perhaps the forerunner of 'spiking' drinks with drugs today). It is also a convenient way to ensure the child victim remains silent about the abuse as they may blame themselves for 'drinking under age'. Abusers tend to be cunning and manipulative and drink is a useful tool to them.

During the brief lifetime of this charity we have received letters from more than two thousand adult survivors and in the few weeks that our national free phone information line (kindly supported by the Department of Health) has been operating we have had more than 2200 people call us.

Again, I don't want to give the impression that those of us who survived an abusive childhood all become drinkers but many do and I think that if we tackle child abuse with more vigour the figures will come down. Likewise as our charity is able to help and support more people who are reporting past abuse so more of those people will take control of their own recoveries and come to accept that they can recover from childhood trauma without the need for a 'crutch'.....but it can be a long, slow and often painful path to recovery.

I hope you are able to bear these points in mind as you progress the consultation on alcohol harm reduction and we would certainly welcome any opportunity to participate further.

Thank you.
Peter Saunders
Founder

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)