

BBC questions efficacy of drug treatment

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The BBC has again questioned the efficacy of drug treatment. Despite an increase in treatment spending from 253m in 2004/05 to 384m last year, BBC News Online reports that the numbers emerging from treatment free of addiction have barely changed.

In response to the BBC's report, shadow home secretary, David Davis MP, has written to the chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee asking for an investigation into drug treatment, describing the investment as massive failed expenditure.

Mr Davis said, this is an absolutely shocking revelation which speaks volumes about the Government's incompetence and distorted priorities. It is yet more evidence why we should focus spending on getting addicts off drugs, and not just spend money managing their addiction.

In its final report published in July 2007, the Conservative Party's Addictions Working Group, although critical of some current drug treatment spending, concluded that more investment to tackle drug and alcohol misuse was needed: It is likely that spending on drugs and alcohol addiction treatment may have to more than double from the current 400 million per annum in order to get people in recovery and to bring us to Swedish and Dutch levels of success. This, however, is a modest investment against the 39 billion that drug and alcohol abuse is estimated to cost society every year or by comparison with the 13 billion a year derived by the Exchequer from alcohol duty alone.

Earlier this year the Scottish Conservative Party pledged to spend an additional 100 million a year on drug rehabilitation. The Party's manifesto stated: Estimates show that for every 1 invested in drug rehab, nearly 10 is saved in policing, court, healthcare and other social costs. Spending an extra 100m a year will save us 1 billion a year, cutting crime in the process.

Commenting on the BBC's report Martin Barnes, DrugScope chief executive, said:

The investment in drug treatment has achieved a great deal and is cost effective in reducing poor health, crime and improving the lives of tens of thousands of individuals and their families. We do now need to raise the bar on treatment effectiveness with more emphasis on aftercare such as housing, training and employment - but claims that money is being wasted are without foundation and misrepresent the real achievements that are being made.

In 2004 the Audit Commission welcomed the progress in improving drug treatment but highlighted the need to improve wraparound or aftercare services. As DrugScope has highlighted in our response to the drug strategy consultation, providing a truly integrated package of support for people during and after treatment is needed if we are to build on the achievements so far.

The goal of ultimately becoming drug free can for some problem drug users take several years and, unless the factors contributing to drug use are addressed, there is the risk of relapse.

Among its recommendations the Audit Commission - *Drug Misuse 2004: Reducing the local impact* said:

From the outset, a supportive infrastructure of key services should be in place to sustain users on the tough road back to recovery. Follow-on services must be kept in place as users rebuild their lives once their clinical treatment has concluded. Local authorities, the health service, police, prison and probation all have core responsibilities to deliver parts of an integrated package of tailored support such as housing, help with transport and child care.

For more information please contact Ruth Goldsmith in the DrugScope Press Office on 020 7940 7517 (07736 895563 out of hours) or at press@drugscope.org.uk

Related Links:

[BBC news online - Slow progress in drug services Breakthrough Britain; Report of the Conservative Party Addictions Working Group \(2007\)](#)

