

## **The Drug scene July 2004 An Overview by Maxie Richards**

The Harm Reduction Policy has kept young people stuck in the drug culture, without hope of recovery and little choice in the matter. (This Policy is the opposite of a Drug-free Policy).

There is, through lack of targeted information, mistaken acceptance of methadone as a treatment, not just by addicted people and their families who have few choices,(and often none),but incredibly by overworked medics who now prescribe it often as the only alternative, this, despite medical research showing that when a methadone dosage is increased, a craving for heroin is set up.

Despair has set in among addicted people, who feel trapped. They complain incessantly about damage to their bones and to their teeth, some are given sugar-free methadone, but the problem persists. The long-awaited research on the bone problem is not forthcoming.

The current situation, in regard to illegal drugs, and the detrimental effect that they are having, and have had on our Nation, can no longer be tolerated, excused, or appeased. The indiscriminate funding, by the Government, of a drug strategy which is a manifest failure, cannot be allowed to continue owing to the severe cost in human life. The health and the very culture of our Nation, is under threat.

The Policy responsible for the present catastrophic situation in our Nation is called, "Harm Reduction." It was brought in about 30 years ago against the wishes of parents who had addicted children. This Policy is a policy of acceptance of drugs in society, on the shaky and quite unacceptable grounds that "drugs are here to stay and there is nothing we can do about it." A fact that was not made clear to anybody, but feared by the astute, was that, taken to its ultimate conclusion, the aim of a Harm Reduction Policy is the legalizing of drugs.

Once the Harm Reduction Policy had been introduced, it's main features slowly became visible. The first needle exchange was opened, in Ruchill, Glasgow, again against the wishes of parents of addicts. Parents saw this for what it was, simply a way of normalising drug addiction. Parents wanted their children's' addiction dealt with, not prolonged indefinitely. They were ignored. Consequently, the spread of addiction grew rapidly, and with it grew an alarming rise in hepatitis C and also HIV. Parents demonstrated outside the Health Board Office in Ingram Street, in Glasgow and also outside the Scottish office in Edinburgh. The next downward step, planned by the Health Board, despite ardent denials, was the introduction of the methadone maintenance programme in 1994. This became an obscene reality with loud promises that it would cut down the crime figures. Maybe professionals believed this would be the case, but parents knew better. Their sons and daughters now have a dual addiction, the Government one and the illegal one, i.e. methadone maintenance, without limit of time, and heroin etc. Many doctors are handing out valium as well.

The drug problem has now escalated out of control, presenting critical issues which are not being addressed.( The queue in Barlinnie prison for methadone is called "the green mile.") In January this year, 2004, the drug that most addicts tried first, i.e. Cannabis, has been reclassified, a very small step from legalising it, by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, to "free up police time." It is evident from Press reports that the Police force itself is now infected with the problem. Two amnesties have, according to the Press, now been issued to serving police officers, one for drugs in general and one for cocaine. The police backed the reclassifying of cannabis!

The insidious trend to make drugs acceptable in society continues unabated. The "Harm Reductionists" are now calling on the Government to change the law so that methadone addicts can hold a driving licence, and drive at will. Methadone, as we know, is a mind altering drug, suppressing emotions and feelings and causing drowsiness. Some of the many other side effects include vertigo, postural hypotension and hallucinations. The Scottish Drug Forum is behind the move! They promote the "Harm Reduction" Policy.

It is not hard to see why the general public is so silent in the midst of so many confusing messages. Most people have never heard of the "Harm Reduction" Policy and assume that the Government, and all the many Agencies paid by the Government, are determined to rid this country of drugs and that they are using every power at their disposal to achieve this.

A glaring example of the duplicity is that of what happened to the Drugs Tsar, Keith Hellowell. Mr. Hellowell was appointed to deal with the drug problem and create a drug-free Britain. He was more than able and prepared to do this. He set to work with great determination and zeal. His deputy, Mike Trace, was a Government appointee and Mr. Hellowell assumed that they would be working as a team. This never happened, because Mike Trace was a covert "Harm Reductionist." When Keith Hellowell realized that he could make no headway with his hands tied behind his back, he resigned. He recently spoke movingly about this experience at an E.C.A.D. Conference in Belfast, in March 2004. (European Cities Against Drugs)

A similar fate was endured, some years earlier, by Michael Forsyth M.P. He launched Scotland Against Drugs with sincerity, and immense hard work and enthusiasm. The "Harm Reductionists" worked against him, because he genuinely believed we could achieve a drug free Scotland and he had the ability to make it happen. He endured a great deal of personal hurt, because they used ridicule as an effective tool. He too resigned. Those of us who are fighting for the stability of our Nation were heartbroken. The Nation has been in decline since, as our young workforce is unskilled, trapped by drugs at an early age and fighting ill health and disillusionment. The death rate has been very high, and those addicted people who are left are traumatised and have been virtually left to rot. Specialised rehabilitation has been a very low priority. Most addicts detox in prison, but they are now put back on methadone before they leave prison! This is the utter madness of "Harm Reduction."

Parents of addicted people, who wanted to believe that a methadone programme was the solution to their children's' addiction, as they were told this in 1994, are now suffering from stress and often on medication themselves for this. Their hope is gone and disillusionment has set in as they watch their children living a half-life. These parents are, all too often, looking after their grandchildren. We need a Government that will tackle the drug problem without fear. This is absolutely essential for the following reasons, though this list is not exhaustive. Every effort must be made to bring health and healing to addicted people. Recovered people should be targeted for advice as they are the true experts on drug treatment requirements.

Dislocation within the family unit, which crumbles under the strain, has led to disillusionment and dislocation in communities. People give up. Standards fall. People have become tired of the struggle which appears to have no end. They have been failed by the Policy makers who are not held to account. Specialised residential drug treatment centers should be set up across Scotland with the emphasis on healing and wholeness. These could be funded with the finance presently being squandered on the methadone programme.

The explosion in the number of drug addicted people now wandering the streets drinking alcohol on top of methadone, (a dangerous practice), desperate for help, is yet another unacceptable feature of the Harm Reduction Policy. There should be an advertising campaign educating society not to accommodate illegal drugs in society in any shape or form. It should be made clear that there is no such thing as "Safe use."

**The suicide rate is now unacceptably high. It should be made clear that living on the street, from hand to mouth, as an addict, is not an acceptable way of living, as it is life-threatening.**

**Alternatives must be available.**

The death rate generally has increased steadily and is unacceptably high. A small west coast village in Ayrshire and Arran, called Cumnock, had 184 addicted people on methadone in June 2003 and at the same time had a death rate which was the second highest in Scotland.( Edinburgh had the highest.) The local NHS fund the Bridge Project there. **One million pounds is spent yearly on methadone in Ayrshire and Arran.** The police force must be encouraged to become much more vigilant where drug dealing and drug activity is concerned. This is an area that needs to be looked at as a matter of urgency. It needs a complete rethink. It is not good enough to "lift" the drug addict as he leaves the dealer's house with his 2 bags of heroin, while the drug dealer is left untroubled to continue selling to the next addict victim ad lib.

**The Drugs Enforcement Agency is beginning to make its presence felt, but by now drug dealers are a law unto themselves, living in luxury, with unlimited financial backing. We as a Nation are held to ransom by gangster drug importers and dealers. Our children are now victims of this illegal trade and families across the nation are left unsupported to carry the cost. Many drug dealers appear to deal with impunity in both large and small communities across the country.**

There is a severe rise, (not much spoken of), in psychological problems among many addicted people, particularly where there is addiction to cannabis, who are living in the community, untreated, presenting a danger to themselves and to their family members and to others, as they demand instant satisfaction.

The next generation is growing up in confusion and chaos, unable to rely on anything. Undernourishment is not uncommon. Problems well hidden under the cloak of confidentiality become highlighted in schools, where hardworking teachers are left to cope as best they can. Breakfast for pupils has had to be introduced in some areas.

There should be an emphasis on building up dislocated communities. Community Centres should be made available to young people, so that they have somewhere safe to go and something to do. Young people must be encouraged to feel valued. Accident and emergency Departments in hospitals are overstretched. Nursing staff and medics are being put at risk by people out of control. Some hospitals, e.g. the Western Infirmary in Glasgow, now have a police kiosk in the Waiting Room.

There should be a crackdown on graffiti and vandalism, so that communities do not lose heart as at present. The anti-social element involved should be involved in rectifying the damage.

Family breakdown has become common. One of the main causes arise where one partner is using cannabis and/or another drug, while the other does not. This situation becomes intolerable. Another cause is the confusion surrounding the addicted person in the family unit. Constant worry leads to

disharmony. Money becomes scarce, and there is resentment over falling living standards and loss of earnings through illness. The lifestyle of the addicted person becomes totally unacceptable to the family. Solutions are hard to find.

Scottish cities should join European Cities Against Drugs without delay, so that they can be encouraged by seeing, first hand, what can be achieved in a relatively short space of time. Nearer home, there is the option of joining the Scottish Coalition Against Drugs.(0141 9426638). There is a great deal to be learnt from cities that have chosen to deal with the problem.

What a loss to the Nation of a generation of talented entrepreneurs whose natural talents and skills have never been realised and whose hope is gone! The Nation is greatly, and very sadly, the poorer for this tragic loss.

Babies born addicted to drugs, underweight and in agony, starting life at a severe disadvantage. This is encouraged by a "Harm Reduction" programme. A doctor is employed at the Royal Maternity Hospital in Glasgow to ensure that addicted pregnant women are automatically put on a methadone programme.

Under a Drug Free policy, this would not be tolerated. Women would be detoxed for the sake of the innocent unborn child.

In order for a Nation to suffer from a major drug epidemic two features must come into focus 1) Drugs must become available and 2) young people must become vulnerable.

Young people have always been vulnerable because they are going through adolescence and emotional change. In the past they learnt to deal with these processes, and the experience taught them patience and endurance and helped to develop their character. Drugs were not available as a ready alternative or quick solution in times past. Drugs are now readily available on our streets.

The real tragedy now is that the quick solution of drugs is denying our young people across the board the opportunity to develop normally and to become the people they were created to be.

The destruction and disabling of our young people by gangsters should be made a priority issue in our Nation. The Government needs to act with appropriate vigour as a matter of extreme urgency.

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