

## Media Watch

Police in Scotland are trialling a scheme to allow police to track where alcohol has been illegally bought by, or for, under-18s. Off-licences will be able to use ultraviolet pens to mark bottles and cans. Chief Inspector Paul Eddington, the operational commander for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, who is behind the scheme, is frustrated that some parents view their children drinking as less dangerous than smoking cannabis. Parents need to know what their children are up to and speak to them about their responsibilities, he said.

*The Sunday Herald, 21 January*

Two 16-year-old British girls have been sentenced to a year in jail in Ghana. Yasemin Vatansever and Yatunde Diya from North London were arrested trying to board a plane in the capital Accra last July. They both denied trying to smuggle cocaine in two laptop bags but the prosecution claimed they had been involved from the start.

*The London Metro, 23 January*

One of Northern Ireland's longest established drug support services faces closure because of lack of funding. Centre manager, Anne Henry, appealed for crucial aid for The Hope Centre in Ballymena, Co Antrim: 'We are in desperate need of additional funding in order to sustain the vital services currently being offered,' she said.

*Belfast Telegraph, 23 January*

The Scottish government has commissioned a large scale study into heroin and cocaine use in Scotland. The study, which will cost £175,000, and is being led by Doctor Gordon Hay from the Centre of Drug Misuse at Glasgow University, is the first of its kind since 2003. Drug-related deaths have been rising in Scotland and 2006 saw the highest number, 421, since records began. The 2003 research concluded that there were 50,000 serious drug users in Scotland – about one per cent of the population. Nobody knows what the current scale of class A drug use is. Experts say this is hampering action to tackle a drugs problem that is among the highest in Western Europe.

*The Scotsman, 14 January*



**“The BMA recognised that the effective blockade methadone dose is between 80-120ml to stop heroin attaching itself to the opiate receptors in the brain. Our average dosage is around 50ml.”**

### Filling a need

I feel the need to respond to Kenneth Eckersley of Addiction Recovery Training Services, who attacked harm reduction and methadone maintenance (*DDN*, 14 January, page 8).

First of all Kenneth derides the fact that methadone maintenance is effective in reducing drug use and crime and then goes on to ask if the social worker whose letter he is attacking knows that methadone is highly addictive.

Well I never Kenneth, methadone highly addictive – thanks for letting us all know that.

'Eighty per cent of those on methadone use another drug once a week,' he says and '44 per cent use heroin once a day'. (These facts from an article in a regional *Big Issue* are hardly representative of the UK.)

Let us state the obvious for Kenneth and any right-wing think tanks.

Eighty per cent are on methadone and other drugs – like maybe cannabis. So what – at least they are not injecting street heroin into their arms or groins, which is why people with compassion understand it is this that needs stopping. We have a hepatitis C epidemic, HIV rising, rising endocarditis (7 in 1,000 injecting drug users), and increasing attacks on working girls. I feel that this is of more importance than people on methadone having a toke.

Forty-four per cent are still using heroin – well if you knew anything about methadone, you would realise

that people who use heroin on top are not on a sufficient dose, because if they were it would block the effects of heroin. The BMA recognised that the effective blockade methadone dose is between 80-120ml to stop heroin attaching itself to the opiate receptors in the brain. Our average dosage is around 50ml.

People on methadone are better at planning crime, you say that the police are saying. Crime is crime for God's sake, whether planned or not, and you seem to forget the fact that for every £1 spent on a methadone script £10 is saved on criminal related issues.

What you Kenneth, and your Tory, Sweden-supporting friends seem to forget is that not everyone wants abstinence!

So how do you force it – cut benefits? That equals more crime. Prison? There's just as much heroin inside as on the outside.

Abstinence works, but people have to be ready for it. At the end of the day, people have and always will use mood-altering chemicals – you don't like it, so everyone must beat to your drum? Not while there is still breath in my body.

**David Wright, drug advocate and SMUG (Substance Misuse User Group Wales) proud member.**

### Logical four-minute warning!

The article written by John Jolly (*DDN*, 14 January, page 14) makes easy and logical reading even for the layman who is unaware of addiction and all

the issues surrounding recovery.

It brought back memories for me of when I first sought help and support in both the private and public sector. I was, in a nutshell, totally petrified, untrusting and anxious, knowing I was going to be judged as I walked through any of the doors. It takes a huge amount of courage and strength for any addict to go through this stage – I am sure other addicts will agree on this and will have been through similar situations.

There were places I just did not return to because of the 'welcome' I'd received. The majority of professionals in both sectors are not addicts so would not know or understand where I, or others, come from. So maybe this clearly written article could easily be discussed at any staff meeting in all sectors, to review the ways that individual staff first approach and invite addicts into their organisation. It wouldn't cost a penny for any sector, and could be a useful tool for personal development for all individuals in whatever role they play towards supporting addicts as they begin to seek recovery.

**S Rendell, by e-mail**

### Changing lives

**Apologies to the Home Office and award winners: in our last issue we named the annual awards as 'Tackling Drugs, Saving Lives' instead of 'Tackling Drugs, Changing Lives' – 'although hopefully we are doing that too,' a Home Office spokesperson added, in pointing out our mistake.**

## We welcome your letters

**Please email letters to the editor, [claire@cjwellings.com](mailto:claire@cjwellings.com) or post them to the DDN address on page 3. Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity – please limit length to 350 words.**