

editorial

drugs

Penny Fraser and Una Padel set the issue in context.

Efforts to tackle drugs have traditionally operated in three spheres: prevention, treatment and enforcement. As Geoffrey Pearson explains in a chapter on 'drug policy dilemmas' in a recent edited collection on young people, drugs and community safety (Marlow and Pearson, 1999), current approaches are shifting the focus within these areas. Traditionally, prevention has been aimed at 'primary prevention' goals - deterring young people from any experimentation with drugs. Treatment has been aimed at problematic users with heavy dependencies; and law enforcement has aimed to stem the availability or supply of drugs.

Developments in the last few years have seen treatment and criminal justice approaches come together in the form of 'arrest referral' schemes, drug treatment and testing orders (DTTOs), and improved assessment and treatment provision in prison (see George Mair, Liz Hales, Steve Hamer and Adam Sampson in this issue). It is now possible to find specialist drugs nurses working alongside criminal justice agencies such as probation and police to deliver intensive rehabilitation programmes to high volume offenders (the so-called 'persistent offender projects' which were described in an article by Anne Worrall in the last issue of CJM).

The policy of harm reduction which was first suggested by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in response to the transmission of HIV between injecting drug

users in the 1980s has come more to the fore within criminal justice. Youth Offending Teams are working with drugs agencies to provide services to young people including counselling and advice about harm reduction. The piece by John McPhail on the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Substance Misuse Project suggests that despite an initial concern over the perceived concentration in the one project of resources for tackling drugs for both counties (which was resolved in the form of a proposed multi-agency young people's

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substance misuse team) these projects can be effective.

As Nigel South argues, drug misuse has become prevalent among young people to an extent that would have been unforeseeable just 30 years ago. South relates this increase in use to patterns of consumption generally and considers the role of drug prevention in this context. Penny Fraser and Toby Seddon expand this theme and urge policy makers and commissioners to target drug prevention resources in the ways that are going to be most effective for individuals and communities.

The debate around drugs, race and crime is explored by Karim Murji and Aidan Gray. Murji argues against the construction of 'black on black crime' and the persona of the 'yardie' who traffics drugs and

guns, which is used for ideological reasons by both police and 'community representatives'. Murji concludes that these constructs rest on a false premise - that race is a meaningful way of grouping humankind rather than fixing heterogeneous groups of people into an 'imaginary common type'. Gray calls for a more informed and less prejudicial debate about the connections between crime and cocaine and the stereotypes that this generates.

Accommodation and drop-in projects for homeless drug users are not only a vital source of food and shelter but also a springboard for accessing other services including drug treatment. Gemma Buckland and colleagues discuss the threat posed to this sort of provision in their examination of the aftermath of the 'Wintercomfort Case' in Cambridge in which two workers with the homeless

were prosecuted under the 1971 *Misuse of Drugs Act*.

The Police Reform Bill signalled the Home Office's intention to consult on a closer working relationship between crime and disorder reduction partnerships and drug action teams. The Local Government Association in a recently published 'rough guide' to the Bill (LGA 2002) indicates its support for the proposal but points out that it will want to ensure that other aspects of the drugs strategy outside criminal justice such as treatment, drug education and prevention retain their focus as well (a concern in relation to the health improvement goals of tackling drugs that is voiced in this issue of CJM by Roger Howard). A number of areas have been attempting to integrate crime and disorder and anti-drugs strategies in advance of this

consultation and Jim McManus describes an integrated crack-cocaine strategy in Lambeth in this issue.

The Lambeth pilot scheme on the policing of cannabis use has received considerable public attention over recent months. Until the private life of Brian Paddick, the police commander behind it, became the primary focus it had given rise to some of the most thoughtful public debate on the legal status of drugs for many years. (Some findings from a recent study showing the inconsistencies in policing of cannabis are published in this issue). It is, of course, difficult to know whether the controversy surrounding Brian Paddick is the result of other factors or the inevitable consequence of doing something different in an area where public opinion is deeply divided and politicians have been reluctant to make change. All the innovative work described in this CJM ultimately requires public and political approval. Adam Sampson describes how difficult it is to develop services without it and suggests that the shift in 'ownership' of drug treatment from health to criminal justice may be making it more difficult to gain that support and approval.

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References:

Local Government Association (2002) *LGA Rough Guide to the Police Reform Bill: key questions for local government.*

Pearson, G. (1999), 'Drug Policy Dilemmas: Partnership, Social Exclusion and Targeting Resources' in A. Marlow and G. Pearson (eds) *Young People, Drugs and Community Safety*, Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.