

'Centre for Social Justice welcomes Government plans for putting recovery first'

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) welcomes the Government's roadmap *Putting Full Recovery First*, in which it sets out how a full recovery-focussed treatment system is to be achieved. It mirrors much of what the CSJ has long advocated for with respect to alcohol and drugs treatment. In the CSJ's seminal piece of work, *Breakthrough Britain*, addiction was identified as one of the five major pathways to poverty. We urged that the root causes of addiction should be tackled, and the fatalistic culture in which individuals languish indefinitely on substitute medication be ended. We argued that reforms must emphasise prevention and life-changing transformation through abstinence-based support.

We are particularly pleased to see the continued commitment to tackle the underlying causes of addiction through early intervention, strengthening families, transforming education and making work pay. And, within this context, we wholly commend the pledge to work with whole families – with a particular focus on protecting the children of parents with addiction – to prevent the intergenerational cycle of addiction. We are also encouraged by plans to put recovery at the heart of prison drug treatment and to strengthen links with treatment in the community so that prisoners are released into the community drug free, and receive the support they require to remain so.

The CSJ supports plans to work with local partnerships to identify their potential to develop recovery-focussed alcohol programmes. However, the Coalition must now go further; for too long governments have failed to acknowledge the harm caused by alcohol, leaving many areas without any significant alcohol treatment provision. This urgently needs to change. The publication of the Government's forthcoming alcohol strategy will be crucial to providing that leadership.

We welcome the decision to abolish the National Treatment Agency (NTA) and absorb its functions into Public Health England (PHE); in our work we have repeatedly told of the NTA's growing bureaucracy and misguided focus on process and prescription. But the Government must ensure that this move is not simply a re-branding exercise: that is, the same NTA methods by a different name. We must see wholesale culture change.

The Government is right to promise that open-ended substitute prescribing will only be used when absolutely necessary, and always with recovery as the ultimate goal. And we commend the initiatives designed to embed a 'locally-led' commitment to recovery in the system as a whole. These include the establishment of a national Substance Misuse Skills Consortium to support a recovery-driven workforce, 'Recovery Champions', and the Patient Placement Criteria to re-orientate treatment options towards recovery.

Response to Government's 2012 *Putting Full Recovery First*
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However, we know that there is significant concern amongst local providers with whom the CSJ has spoken that the recovery-focussed agenda is at risk of floundering due to its lack of momentum and support at a local level. In this context, we doubt whether the provisions set out in the roadmap will be sufficient on their own to engender the culture shift to recovery on the frontline that is necessary to end years of waste and damage.

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