



Joint Briefing on the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21

Committee Stage, House of Lords – starting 25 January 2021

Alcohol alone is not a cause of domestic abuse, and never an excuse. There are, however, a number of ways in which alcohol and domestic abuse are related, and this briefing outlines how six amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 can address and account for this link.

There is strong evidence for the links between alcohol and perpetrating domestic abuse

- 25-50% of cases of domestic abuse take place when the perpetrator has been drinking.¹
- The risk of rape is twice as high in attacks involving drinking offenders.²
- [Research by Adfam and AVA](#) in 2012 found that parents experience abuse from their children who are using alcohol.
- Sheffield Hallam University and Alcohol Change UK's [2018 Family Life in Recovery](#) survey found that 32% of family members were victims of violence when their loved one had an active addiction, but only 11% when the loved one was in recovery.

Experiencing domestic abuse can increase problem drinking as a coping mechanism

- Women who experience extensive physical and sexual violence are more than twice as likely to have a problem with alcohol than those with little experience of violence and abuse.³
- Domestic violence refuges often exclude women with alcohol problems. A review of London refuges found that only 26% always or often accept women who use alcohol or other drugs.⁴

There are many types of abuse linked to alcohol

- [Domestic abuse can include](#) sexual, economic and emotional abuse, themes which were found among the people featured in 11 alcohol-related [Safeguarding Adult Reviews](#) analysed by Alcohol Change UK, conducted when an individual with safeguarding concerns had died.

Lessons about alcohol use and domestic abuse during the pandemic show that we need to change how we approach these issues going forward

- Evidence from [Alcohol Change UK](#) and [Public Health England](#)'s monitoring of the wider impacts of COVID-19 have found that previously heavy drinkers have increased their drinking levels further during the pandemic. This level of drinking is more likely experienced by perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.
- The switch to remote services in both the alcohol and domestic abuse support sectors has led to both opportunities and challenges. The most marginalized groups without access to technology have been left unable to use support and treatment services while some who were previously unlikely to attend face-to-face will have benefitted.

For more information see the Alcohol and Families Alliance briefing on the Second Reading⁵ and the recent report of the Alcohol Harm Commission.⁶

Alcohol-related amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21

Amendments to Clause 7 ([pages 3-4](#))

Due to the close but complex link between alcohol and domestic abuse, it is important that alcohol forms part of the role and remit of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. The two amendments to Clause 7 would add substance use (i.e. alcohol and other drugs) to the responsibilities of the Commissioner as set out in the bill.

- i) **The first amendment to Clause 7, in the name of Baroness Finlay, Lord Brooke, Baroness Burt and Lord Hunt** specifies that the good practice that the Commissioner must encourage in providing protection and support to people affected by domestic abuse must include substance use, addictions and mental health support.
- ii) **The second amendment to Clause 7, in the name of Baroness Finlay, Lord Brooke and Lord Hunt**, specifies that the Commissioner may have regard to the relationship between domestic abuse and substance use as part of their duties.

Amendment to Clause 12 in the name of Baroness Finlay, Lord Brooke, Baroness Burt and Lord Hunt ([page 5](#))

The Bill requires the Commissioner to set up an advisory board to provide advice on the exercise of her functions, and sets out a list of specific requirements for who should be represented on the board. This amendment adds a requirement that the advisory board to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner include at least one person with expertise in substance use, addictions and mental health.

Amendment to Clause 55 in the name of Baroness Finlay, Lord Brooke and Baroness Burt ([pages 10-11](#))

This part of the Bill puts an obligation on local authorities to provide support to victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The amendment to this clause specifies that this support should include substance use, addictions and mental health support where necessary.

Amendment to Clause 56 in the name of Baroness Finlay ([page 16](#))

This amendment would ensure the domestic abuse local partnership board that local authorities are required to set up would include at least one person with expertise of substance use, addictions and mental health.

Amendment to Clause 73 in the name of Baroness Finlay ([page 48](#))

This amendment would ensure that guidance issued by the Secretary of State on domestic abuse must cover the link between domestic abuse and substance use.

Supporting groups

[Adfam](#) is a national charity tackling the effects of alcohol, drug use or gambling on family members and friends by empowering families and friends to get the support they need, building the confidence, capacity and capability of frontline practitioners to provide effective services and influencing decision-makers

[Alcohol Change UK](#) works for a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol by striving for five key changes: improved knowledge, better policies and regulation, shifted cultural norms, improved drinking behaviours, and more and better support and treatment. We provide secretariat to the newly re-registered APPG on Alcohol Harm.

The [Alcohol and Families Alliance](#) is an alliance of over 40 organisations operating in the remit of alcohol, drug and family services in the UK. Each organisation is committed to reducing alcohol related harm experienced by families, and together our alliance provides evidence and expertise on the subject of families and alcohol.

The [Alcohol Health Alliance UK](#) is a coalition of more than 50 organisations working together to reduce the harm caused by alcohol. Members include medical royal colleges, charities and treatment providers.

The [Institute of Alcohol Studies](#) is an independent institute bringing together evidence, policy and practice from home and abroad to promote an informed debate on alcohol's impact on society. Our purpose is to advance the use of the best available evidence in public policy decisions on alcohol.

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- ¹ Bennett and Bland (2008) [Substance abuse and intimate partner violence](#), National online recourse centre on violence against women
- ² Brecklin and Ullman (2002) [The Roles of Victim and Offender Alcohol Use in Sexual Assaults: Results from the National Violence against Women Survey](#), Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Volume 63: Issue 1
- ³ Women's Aid website [the nature and impact of domestic abuse](#)
- ⁴ Against Violence and Abuse (2014) [Case by Case: Refuge provision in London for survivors of domestic violence who use alcohol and other drugs or have mental health problems](#), p. 17
- ⁵ http://www.alcoholandfamiliesalliance.org/uploads/2/6/4/5/26455483/alcohol_and_families_alliance_briefing_-_domestic_abuse_bill_-_hol_2nd_reading.pdf
- ⁶ Commission on Alcohol Harm (2020) "It's Everywhere": alcohol's public face and private harm – the report of the Commission on Alcohol Harm" [available from <https://ahauk.org/resource/commission-on-alcohol-harm-report/>]