



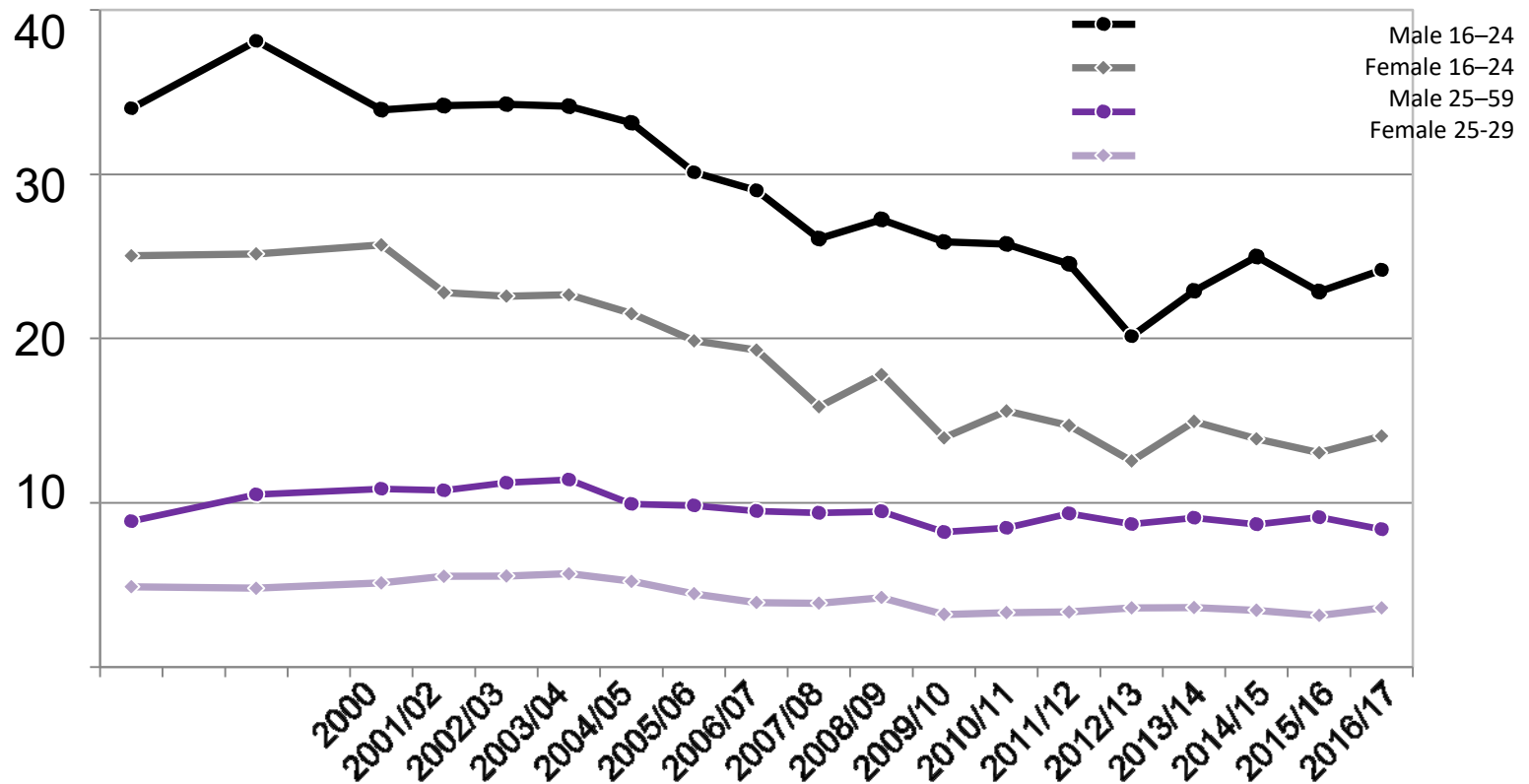
Home Office

Main challenges in including the gender approach in drug policy

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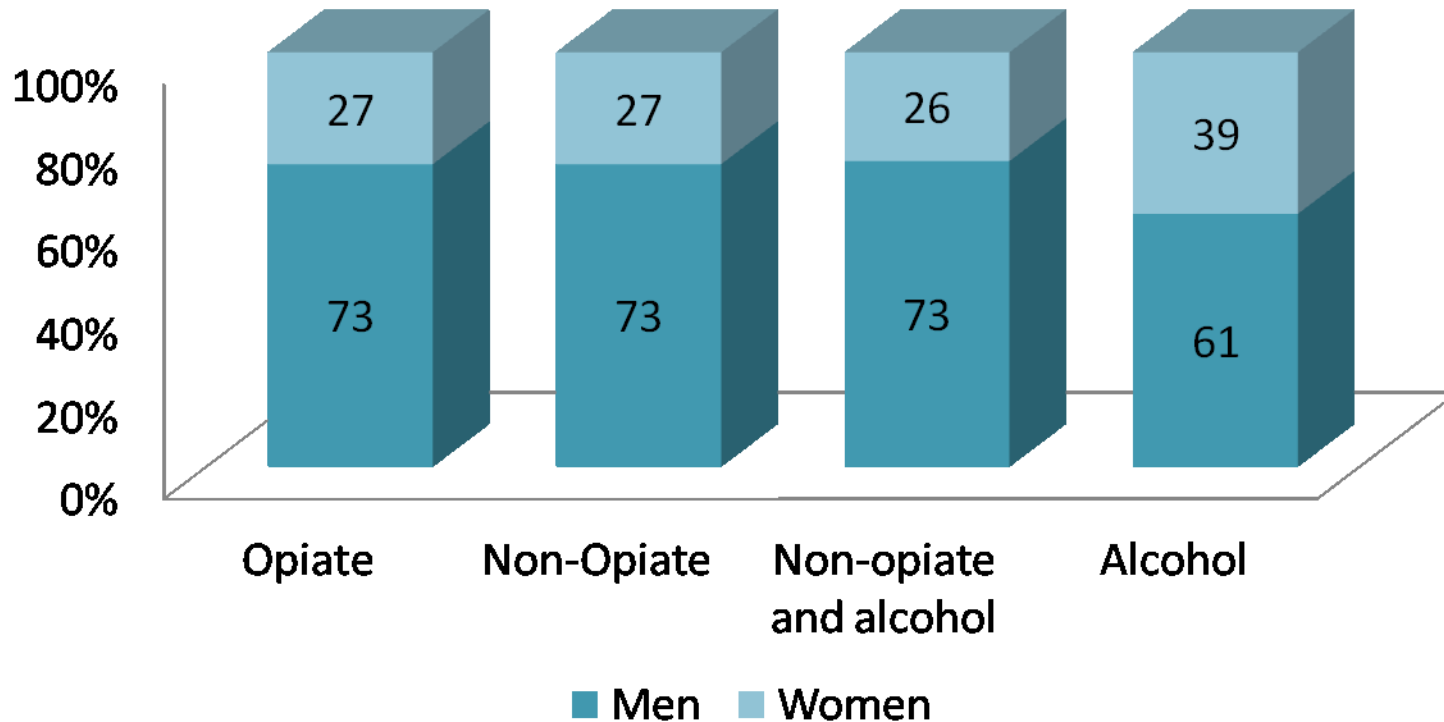
UK Experience - Prevalence

Percentage of 16 to 24 and 25 to 59 year olds using any drug in the last year by sex, 1996 to 2016/17

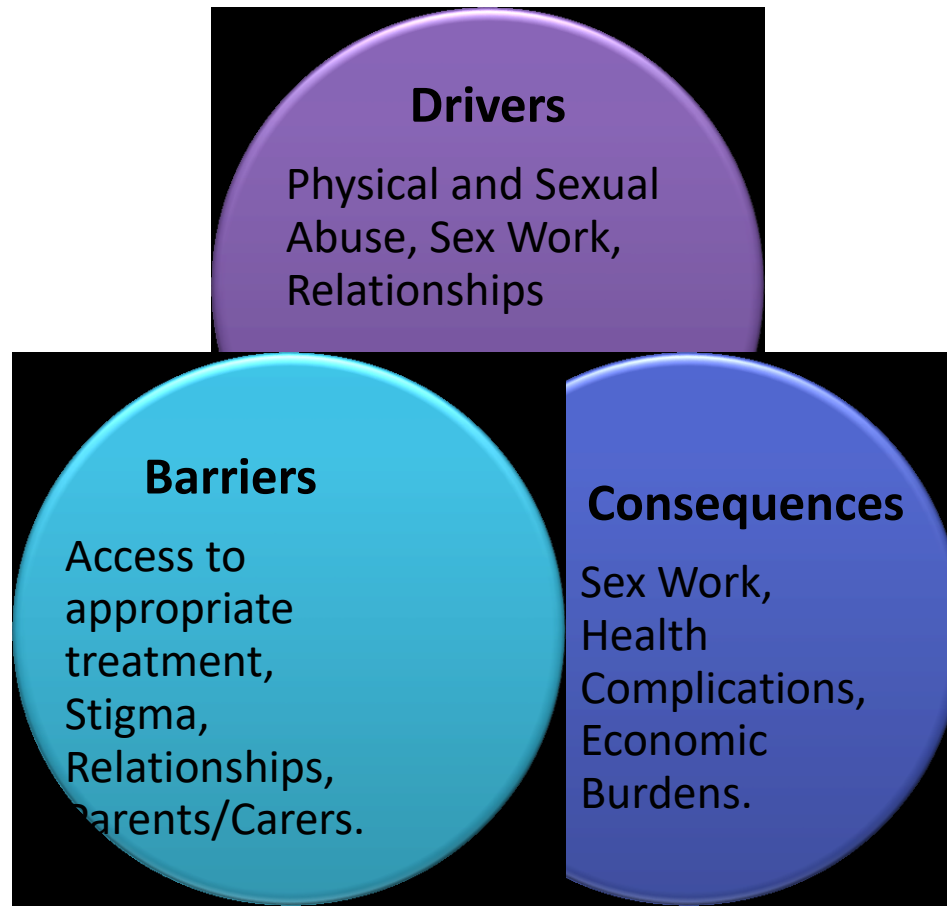


UK Experience – Treatment Data

Gender percentage of all clients in treatment by substance



Issues



Experiences of women who use drugs

- [Play video](#)

Physical and sexual abuse

Women with experience of extensive physical and sexual violence are more likely to have an alcohol problem or be dependent on drugs

- **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy - Early intervention, behavioral change and support.**

Sex Workers

Those selling sex are at greater risk of drug misuse, which can be a way of coping with what they are having to do, or because they are being coerced (into both prostitution and drug use), or because they became involved in prostitution to fund an existing drug dependence.

- In 2016 the UK published the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which set out that we will continue to tackle the harm and exploitation associated with prostitution, including substance misuse, while supporting those who want to leave prostitution

Families

Parental drug and alcohol dependence can have a significant impact on families, particularly children, and can limit the parent's ability to care for their child(ren) and access treatment.

- Supporting vulnerable families to break intergenerational pathways to dependence is a part of our approach to prevent and reduce the demand for drugs and to help build recovery.

Access to services and stigma

Women may also find it more difficult to access vital services in order to get the support they need to recover.

- Ensuring that services are tailored to the needs of individuals.

Examples of good practise

- Grace House is a female-only residential service run by Phoenix Futures. The service provides drug and alcohol free support for women with substance misuse problems and complex needs, including domestic violence, offending behaviour, sexual exploitation, homelessness and eating disorders.



Conclusions

- It is important that policy responses recognise the drivers behind drug use in women and that early interventions are targeted to prevent drug use in the first place.
- The issues faced by women who use drugs are complex and a holistic and multi-agency approach is required to address the various issues.
- It is crucial to ensure that services are adaptable and responsive to the individual needs of the individual. This can include women only services or parent and child friendly spaces.