

**Response to
House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts
Report on Alcohol Treatment Services
and the Omission of Harms Caused by Alcohol in Utero**

24 May 2023



The National Organisation for FASD is disappointed to see Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) omitted from yet another official discussion around alcohol harm, highlighting the dire need of joined-up thinking across services and sectors to help protect some of society's most vulnerable.

In its latest report on Alcohol Treatment Services, the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts has neglected to make any mention of the extensive lifelong harms caused to the brains and bodies of developing fetuses by alcohol exposure in the womb.

The National Organisation for FASD believes that it is impossible – and perhaps irresponsible - to have any thorough discussion of alcohol harm and treatment services without including FASD. Therefore, we urge the Committee to reconsider the parameters of its discussions moving forward, to include the full scope of harm that alcohol can cause, including alcohol harm in utero.

FASD is more prevalent in the UK than other more widely recognised conditions such as autism, yet is shamefully underdiagnosed, misunderstood, and, crucially, preventable. This lack of focus on FASD prevention, diagnosis and support is a blind spot that fails pregnant women and people with FASD and causes increased, preventable costs to the public purse.

The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts has the power to help alter the futures of people in the UK with FASD and their loved ones by encouraging the implementation of much needed prevention, diagnosis, and lifelong support services and by highlighting the costs of inaction on already overburdened services. The Committee celebrates in its report the ringfencing of funding for drug and alcohol recovery services but there too people with FASD – those affected for life by alcohol before their first breath – are left out. We call for funding for FASD prevention, diagnosis and support to be similarly ringfenced as well, in line with improvements called for in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Quality Standard 204 and highlighted in the DHSC FASD Health Needs Assessment for England.

Both the NICE and the Department of Health and Social Care have recognised FASD as a front-line health concern in need of greater service provision. As such, this Committee must now play its part in acting on what is now well-established healthcare policy and help to ensure funding to implement the guidance about alcohol in pregnancy from the Chief Medical Officers and the improvements called for by NICE, DHSC, SIGN, PHE/OHID and indeed the World Health Organisation. This egregious error shows once again that a Green Paper on FASD Strategy is sorely needed.

National FASD stands ready to help provide the Committee with access to information and resources they need to understand FASD and the changes that are needed to prevent it, as well as to diagnose and support people with FASD. We critically offer to bring people with FASD and their families to meet with your committee members.

For more information please contact: info@nationalfasd.org.uk or call 07920 747560.