

# Losing a son and the lessons for preventing drug-related deaths

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Anyone's Child (<https://anyoneschild.org>)

# Kevin's death



# Kevin's story (1)



# Kevin's story (2)



# Kevin's story (3)



# Kevin's story (4)



## Priorities for Drug Policy Reform

- Removal of Drug Policy from the Home Office to NHS and shift from regarding drug use as a criminal or moral failing to be punished/policed/controlled to a health issue to be tackled within the NHS.
- Decriminalisation of possession of all drugs for personal use.
- Gradual move to legal regulation of supply of all drugs along a number of models depending upon dangers posed by different drugs (from licensed premises to pharmacy supply and prescription –only).



# Priorities for Drug Treatment Reform

- Safe Injecting facilities (DCRs/EHRCs)
- Abandonment of the abstinence goal and perverse incentives for treatment providers. Success not to be equated only with abstinence. Harm reduction and staying alive important goals in themselves.
- Heroin Assisted Treatment
- More talking therapies *before and alongside* treatment. Much closer integration with mental health services. Seeking the reasons for 'self-medication'
- Acceptance of full participation by clients in deciding the nature and pace of their own dependence-'recovery' journeys. Respect for their own analysis of their condition.
- Re-evaluation and recalibration of OST
- Abandon penalties for non-compliance
- Naloxone availability and distribution important
- Drug testing facilities

Bearing in mind the close correlations between drug dependence and childhood trauma, abuse, broken families, poverty and unemployment, none of the above is likely to work without social interventions for many users: assistance with homelessness; reskilling, training courses; rehabilitation through sport and art, involving mentors.



## **Opportunities for early intervention (pertinent to Kevin's case but with wider implications)**

- Predictability is a key to prevention: starts with recognition of children predisposed to drug use and dependency
- More support for children in care and for adopters (greater health/mental health support)
- Early health and mental health intervention with children exhibiting problematic behaviours, attention deficit, pre school and early school
- Much more help and changes in the syllabus for children with ADHD, dyslexia and literacy/learning problems in school, ie children exhibiting neuro-diversity.
- Meaningful and expert mental health services/interventions/emotional support, throughout the school years
- Accessible and immediate help for young people and adults without stigma or judgement

**Anyone's Child** (<https://anyoneschild.org>)  
(part of **Transform Drug Policy Foundation**: <https://transformdrugs.org/>)

