

## 'Viagra and Jack Daniels' culture is creating a crisis of masculinity for British men, claims Labour's Diane Abbott

- **Generation of men in the grip of crisis, shadow health minister says**
- **Drink and porn fuel anxiety about sexual performance and masculinity**
- **Lack of jobs means young men live with parents in 'extended adolescence'**

By Matta Chorley, Mail online Political Editor

British men are in 'crisis', Labour will claim today in a warning about the impact of unemployment, pornography, drink and drugs on half the population.

A 'Viagra and Jack Daniels' culture is fuelling anxiety among men who worry about their sexual performance, masculinity and material wealth, shadow health minister Diane Abbott claims. In a major speech today sounding the alarm on the fears and worries of a generation of young men, she will claim pressures in society are stoking homophobia and misogyny towards women.



Crisis: Young men are turning to anti-impotence drugs under pressure to live up to expectations in a what Labour's Dianne Abbott calls a 'Viagra and Jack Daniels' culture

It comes as Labour makes a major pitch towards family policy, arguing in favour of banning adverts aimed at children and offering more help to new mothers to cope with post-natal depression.

In today's speech Ms Abbott claims men in 21st century Britain face pressure to live up to the concept of a 'real man' seen in films, magazines and porn but feel unable to talk about their anxieties.

'It's all become a bit like the film Fight Club – the first rule of being a man in modern Britain is that you're not allowed to talk about it,' she will say. 'This generation no longer asks itself what it means to be a man.' Healthy men under pressure to perform are turning to drugs like Viagra. 'Growing numbers of men of all ages [are] turning to the drug by themselves due to performance anxiety, triggered by a host of psychological issues – from our increasingly pornified culture making 'normal' sex seem boring, to financial pressures.

'It may be a secret, psychological crutch for some men, who are under pressure to meet a pornified expectation,' she will say.

Fight Club: Young do not talk about what it is like to be a man in modern Britain, Ms Abbott claims

Unable to find jobs after leaving school or university, many return home to live with parents and 'find themselves locked into a transitional phase at home, or find themselves voluntarily creating an extended adolescence, sometimes resentful of family life'.

A must-have culture of buying expensive gadgets, clothes and jewellery is fuelling 'hypermasculinity', she suggests. 'At its worst, it's a celebration of heartlessness; a lack of respect for women's autonomy; and the normalisation of homophobia. I fear it's often crude individualism dressed up as modern manhood,' she will say.



The speech by Ms Abbott is the latest move by Labour to seize family policy as a political battleground

Labour's policy review is examining a raft of ideas aimed specifically at men, including obesity, alcohol and sexual health campaigns.

The party also wants to give fathers a bigger role before and after the birth of their child. In a speech this week policy chief Jon Cruddas promised more support for new dads, including paid time off to attend ante-natal classes and allowing them to stay overnight in hospital after their partner gives birth. He warned the majority of men 'feel fathers are undervalued' and struggle to cope with parenting in the 21st century.

New dads feel 'less informed than their partners and less competent to care for their baby', Mr Cruddas warned. Dads would get new rights written into law, if Labour wins the next election. Mr Cruddas said: 'More and more men want to be involved fathers. Fathers should be able to share involvement in their child's school life and healthcare.'

'They should have rights enshrined in employment law; for example, we will look at paid leave to attend antenatal sessions and hospital appointments during pregnancy.'

Many public services think involving fathers is 'not important', viewing all fathers as a posing a 'risk' of 'violence against women'.