helping children affected by
a parent's drinking

Who are Nacoa ?

- ***Offer information, advice and support for children affected by a parent's drinking***
- ***Reach professionals who work with them***
- ***Raise their profile in the public consciousness***
- ***Promote research into the problems they face and the prevention of alcohol use disorder developing in this vulnerable group***

our patrons

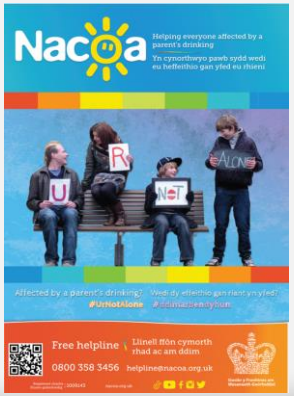
Nacoa

helping everyone affected by
a parent's drinking

Our work

- Free Helpline by telephone, email and letter
- Website and Instant chat
- Information packs
- Publications
- Schools Poster Campaign
- Training programmes
- Information
- Research
- Media and Press

Nacoa has received over:
524,000 helpline calls
1 million website visits
220,000 social media contacts



Nacoa
helping everyone affected by a parent's drinking

Nacoa model of care

Alcohol dependency is a family illness

1 in 5 children in the UK live with a parent who drinks hazardously

Previous research suggests that children affected are:

- 6 times more likely to witness domestic violence
- 5 times more likely to develop an eating problem
- 3 times more likely to consider suicide
- 2 times more likely to experience difficulties at school
- 2 times more likely to develop alcoholism or addiction
- 2 times more likely to be in trouble with the police

We take a person-centred approach

Alcoholism: The Family Illness

Parents do not choose to become dysfunctional but adapt their behaviour in order to cope with alcohol dependency and the resulting stigma.

The following adaptive patterns of behaviour allow the family unit to balance the effects of the drinking parent and keep the family together. This can lead to the adoption of roles for the family members.

- Feelings of guilt and shame — feeling like they are to blame
- Developing unhealthy defences to deal with emotional pain
- Being unable to identify or express feelings or trust
- Find intimate relationships difficult
- Denial and/or minimisation of past and current problems

The Roles

Role	Motivating Feeling	Identifying Symptoms	Pay Off For Individual	Pay Off For Family	Possible Price
Dependent	Shame	Chemical use	Relief of pain	None	Addiction
Enabler	Anger	Powerlessness or Martyr	Importance Righteousness	Responsibility	Illness Exhaustion
Hero	Inadequacy Guilt	Over-achievement	Attention (positive)	Self-worth	Compulsive drive
Scapegoat	Hurt	Delinquency	Attention (negative)	Focus away from dependent	Self-destruction Addiction
Lost Child	Loneliness	Solitary Shyness	Escape	Relief	Social isolation
Mascot	Fear	Clowning Hyperactivity	Attention (amused)	Fun	Immaturity Emotional illness Addiction

Adapted, with kind permission, from the work of Sharon Wegscheider Cruse, who worked with Virginia Satyr on family dysfunction

Nacoa

Case Study: Andrew

- 13 years old
- Fear of being removed from family
- Had experience of speaking out and getting into more trouble for it
- He wanted someone to talk to that he could trust to listen and hear about his world not just his pain
- He wanted to remain in control and reassurance
- Andrew decided to talk to social services
- He thanked us for being there and not trying to take over

Quotes from Callers

“It’s comforting that there is someone on who will hear and actually understand me, things get on top of me sometimes and your helpline is a really good place to get things off my chest. Sometimes all I need is someone to listen with empathy. It’s made me feel less alone”

“ I really wanted to thank you for these last few weeks, I really do appreciate it, having someone to talk to, it has really helped and it’s made me feel less alone.”

Quotes from Callers

“Verbalising it all through with you is like really helpful. You guys have that time that I can verbalise it all and it really helps! I can talk to you and know that men in white jackets won’t come and it removes that fear.”

“Finding someone who I felt comfortable talking to was the beginning of everything changing for me. Speaking to someone who listened without interruption and who understood the suffocation of keeping secrets was brilliant. Things could have been very different for both of us. Without your help and support, Mum could have drunk herself to death and I could have spent the rest of my life watching her. Now I know there is help for Mum and for me. Now I can get on with my own life.’

Information for professionals

Important messages to pass on to children include:

- You are not alone.
- You are not responsible for your parent's drinking.
- You did not cause it and you can't control it.
- You are not responsible for your parent's behaviour.
- There are people who can help.

Who Can Help?

- Encourage the child to talk about their relationships with friends / family.
- Be aware that some children have no-one else to confide in.
- Help the child to contact the **Nacoa Helpline**: **0800 358 3456**.
- Local clubs and sports teams may help the child to build positive relationships.

Ongoing Support:

- Refer the child to someone with specialist skills e.g. a School Counsellor.
- Be prepared to continue to provide a listening ear
- Remind the child that the Nacoa Helpline provides ongoing support without time limits and can be accessed **confidentially** by phone and email. You can also access this too as well as our resources.

HOW TO RESPOND

The signs may not be apparent over a telephone line, although so many things are communicated through voice, intonation and the change in the style of reporting as well as direct reporting changes in behaviour.

It can take a great deal of courage for a child or young person to talk to someone about their abuse, because they are “telling on” someone who is more powerful than they are.

The child or young person learns to be very good at covering up the abuse and is able to give plausible explanations for what has happened. They may feel they are having to betray a person who is not only close to them, but also loved by them and they are risking a great deal in the hope that you will believe what they say.

Helpful Responses

- Remain calm, accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully, without interrupting
- Be aware of your own non-verbal messages
- Make it clear that you are taking the caller seriously
- Acknowledge their courage and reassure them that they are right to tell
- Reassure them that they need not feel guilty, that you're sorry that this has happened to them
- Let them know that you are going to do everything you can to help and what may happen as a result, don't make promises you can't keep
- Make a note of what was said. Use the child or young person's actual words wherever possible

What can you do?

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Nacoa is here for YOU too!

“One of my students who had never been able to fully disclose her situation before I signposted her to you, I wish you could see what your help has done for her! She now has a life she never expected or believe she deserved. Thank you.
- Teacher

“Nacoa has a truly wonderful website, 6C’s I have printed out and given to the boys, this has really helped. I’m going to print and laminate your poster and put it on my door and sit with the boys and read Jasper’s Wish to them.”
- Primary School Safeguarding Lead
(Looking after two brother age 7 and 8, in a Muslim family, mother sectioned with mental health and has alcohol dependency)

“I just wanted to call and say thank you so much, we got the pack and the resources you sent were so helpful. It was good to be so well informed and the books are beautiful so thank you. We had a meeting with the parent which went well and we’re going to start sharing the resources with the pupil.”
- School Pastoral Manager

Outlook

- **Scale of problem** is vast: 1 in 5 school age children live with a parent who drinks too much
- **Lack of co-ordination nationwide** + lack of services in some areas + under-resourced services
- **Lack of awareness** amongst the public that alcohol dependency affects the whole family
- **Social media + email** has increased engagement with young people
- In February 2016 Nacoa Patron, The Rt. Hon. Liam Byrne MP announced the setting up of an **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children of Alcohol dependents**

More information

Read our website **nacoa.org.uk**

- Real life stories
- Help & advice
- Publications
- Facts & figures
- Message boards

Email us
helpline@nacoa.org.uk

Call us
0800 358 3456