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Adfam's manifesto for families

5 key challenges
for supporting families
affected by
drug and alcohol use



Adfam

Families, drugs and alcohol

“You don't have to use drugs to be affected by them”

Recognition of the needs of families affected by someone else's drug and alcohol use has increased, at a policy level, over recent years. The national drug strategy *Drugs: Protecting families and communities* (2008) has gone further than its predecessor in addressing the needs of families and 'Think Family' initiatives are now designed to encourage all public service delivery agents to be alert to the needs of the whole family. However, as the national umbrella organisation for drug and alcohol family support, Adfam is keen to uncover whether this increasing political debate has been translated successfully into practice and if it is improving the quality of life for families affected by drugs and alcohol.

From October to December 2009, Adfam held nine regional consultations across the country with stakeholders who work or come into contact with families affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use; participants included representatives from family support agencies, treatment providers, Drug and Alcohol Action Teams, health service professionals and local children's services representatives. The strong common themes from these consultations have been pulled together to create five key challenges affecting the delivery of family support. Adfam believes that the incoming Government should work to address these challenges to reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol use to families.

Adfam works to improve the quality of life for families affected by drug and alcohol use. We do this by working with a network of individuals and organisations who come into contact with families, friends and carers affected by drug and alcohol use. As identified by our consultations and this resultant manifesto, there is still a considerable amount of work and development to be achieved to ensure that the needs of families are addressed. Adfam is committed to working together with local providers, partnerships and regional and central government offices to ensure that these challenges are overcome.

We are asking you to address the **5 key challenges for families**, identified by stakeholders across England

1 Supporting families in their own right

2 Involving families in treatment

3 Monitoring effectiveness

4 Public services thinking family

5 Commissioning effectively

1

Key challenge

Supporting families in their own right

Why is it important?

Recently the UK Drug Policy Commission estimated that at least 1.5 million adults are affected by someone else's drug use¹. Government estimates are that up to 350,000 children are affected by parental drug use, and up to 1.3m by alcohol². Other reports suggest these are conservative estimates and propose figures of up to 8 million affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use³. These family members report that there is a significant negative impact on their physical and mental health, financial circumstances and family relationships. There is a growing body of evidence on the serious impact and long term negative implications on the health and wellbeing of children affected by parental substance use. In 2007, local authority social services departments spent around £117 million dealing with families where there were substance misuse issues. It is clear that this is a significant concern for family members, communities, local authorities and central government.

However, barriers exist for family members in accessing support where it is provided due to a lack of awareness of their own needs, fear of social stigma or labelling, or the service not being accessible to all members of the community. Unfortunately there still remain many local areas where there is no support for families in their own right. Where family support is provided and accessed, families report significant benefits and improvements in their wellbeing and that of the drug or alcohol user. However there is more that can be done to maximise the coverage and uptake of support for families in their own right.

What you should commit to

Access to support for family members improves outcomes for children, families and drug or alcohol users. We need to ensure that these families are able to access support by encouraging greater awareness of their needs.

You should commit to:

- **Encouraging** local authorities to provide or build the capacity of services that work with families to make it quick and easy for them to access essential support, regardless of the treatment status of the service user
- **Delivering** local awareness raising programmes on the impact of drug and alcohol use, not just on the user, but also on their families and communities to enable people to be aware of the provision of support
- **Identifying** ways of increasing awareness within specific under-represented populations such as BME communities, LGBT people and men, and encourage the dissemination of best practice in this area
- **Supporting** the provision of interventions and community level programmes to improve awareness and help-seeking behaviour amongst hard to engage groups.

1 http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/publications.shtml#Families_report#Families_report

2 *Hidden Harm*, <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/acmd/hidden-harm.html>
Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/alcohol_misuse.aspx

3 Velleman and Templeton (2007)
<http://apt.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/full/13/2/79>

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Key challenge

Involving families in treatment

Why is it important?

Drug or alcohol users are still frequently seen in the vacuum of their substance use, but this is often part of a set of complex problems that are faced by the user and their family. The challenge for the drug and alcohol treatment field is to look beyond the substance and to the wider context for the service user.

There is an increasing recognition that involving family members in treatment can make a significant contribution to effective outcomes and facilitate recovery for both the drug user and family members. The UK guidelines on clinical management, *Drug misuse and Dependence* (2007)⁴, and NICE (2007)⁵ recognise the significant contribution that family involvement makes to adult drug treatment. However, in some treatment services there is a fear of asking the pertinent questions or engaging with families.

Participants at Adfam's consultations found that there remain vast variations in families' involvement in treatment across the country. It was also noted that it is not always appropriate to involve families in treatment due to relationship breakdown, domestic violence or abuse. There is currently limited and insufficient guidance for practitioners on how to engage families safely and appropriately.

What you should commit to

We need to make sure that drug and alcohol treatment services are aware of the needs of families and are working to involve them, when appropriate, in service users' treatment.

You should commit to:

- **Ensuring** that drug and alcohol practitioners are provided with a continuous programme of education, training and supervision that supports the involvement of families in treatment and points to the circumstances where it is not appropriate to involve families
- **Encouraging** a national understanding of confidentiality policies and procedures that recognises the involvement of families
- **Supporting** a culture shift in treatment services that challenges providers to focus beyond the substance
- **Pressing** for full strategic support in all local authorities to increase capacity in terms of workforce and recognition of good practice when it is being delivered.

⁴ http://www.nta.nhs.uk/publications/documents/clinical_guidelines_2007.pdf

⁵ <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG52>;
<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG51>

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Key challenge

Monitoring effectiveness

Why is it important?

The National Drug Treatment Monitoring System is designed to enable the Government and local authorities to monitor and translate central initiatives into a performance framework. There is no such monitoring provision for family support – neither in terms of involvement in treatment nor support for families in their own right. In some circumstances, in an effort to prove effectiveness and meet targets, treatment monitoring models are being applied to family support provision: this is not only inadequate but also invalid.

Indicators are a common feature of the modern service delivery environment – but currently, if local authorities identify the impact of drug and alcohol use on families in their area as being significant, there are no mechanisms for it to be prioritised on the local agenda.

What you should commit to

We need to make sure that all local family support provision meets an approved national standard and there is consistency of delivery across all areas. However, this must be applied in a measured and appropriate way to ensure it doesn't become another administrative burden placed on already stretched provision.

You should commit to:

- **Improving** data collection of families accessing support to build a better picture of the extent of delivery and positive outcomes
- **Ensuring** that a framework of national public service delivery includes support for families to enable local areas to identify this as a priority
- **Pressing** for the implementation of outcome monitoring to ensure that all services are working at a high quality and to a national standard
- **Developing** a system of monitoring that is fit for purpose and understands both the specifics of family support and the environment within which it is delivered.

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Key challenge

Public services thinking family

Why is it important?

Public services have a key role to play in engaging and supporting families who are affected by drugs and alcohol. It is essential that those services are accessible, welcoming and aware of the needs of all family members. It is crucial that families receive the right support at the right time to ensure their needs are met. All public services should be alert to the implications of drug and alcohol use for family members, including parents, grandparents, children, partners and siblings, beyond the client's problems.

Adfam's consultations were unanimous in showing that families need public services to be aware of the support needs of those affected by drugs and alcohol. A lack of awareness and the lack of a coordinated approach can lead to families either not receiving support or receiving inappropriate support to meet their needs.

All public services have a responsibility to look beyond the client or patient's problems and be aware of the implications of drug and alcohol use for all family members, especially children, as laid out in *Think Family* guidance⁶. However, participants at Adfam's consultations felt that there was a lack of consistency in practice, with services not recognising the needs of families or sharing information intelligently.

What you should commit to

In order to support a whole family, public services must deliver a whole partnership approach with delivery agents who are alert to the needs of all family members.

You should commit to:

- **Ensuring** that local strategic plans are developed and implemented in a whole partnership approach, supporting each provider to work effectively with others
- **Raising** the awareness of all public service professionals, including GPs, of the impact a patient's drug and alcohol use has on family members, especially children
- **Ensuring** that local partnerships' structures and procedures make it quick and easy for family members to be signposted or referred to essential support at the right time
- **Implementing** a national template enabling all public service professionals to ask the appropriate questions and engage with the *Think Family* agenda, alongside training packages that challenge the silo approach to service delivery.

⁶ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/ig00637/>

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Key challenge

Commissioning effectively

Why is it important?

The needs of families are varied and complex and the corresponding provision of support must reflect the cross-sector issues. Families affected by drug and alcohol use often struggle with physical and mental health concerns, housing issues, financial difficulties, employment problems and many more. In order for services and practitioners to be effective and work cooperatively with other agencies, they need to be commissioned appropriately. Family support services offer much broader functions than just drug and alcohol services, and this needs to be recognised in commissioning practices.

In an environment of budget cuts and economic concern, it is important that services are commissioned and delivered efficiently. In many areas, family support services have been operating with insecure income streams and are sporadically offered surpluses at the end of funding cycles. This lack of secure funding prevents services from developing innovative and effective practices with any long term commitment.

What you should commit to

Well commissioned and securely funded family support services can impact significantly on families, communities and the recovery of drug or alcohol users. Effective family support can also meet the aims of different policy agendas such as public health, crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and education.

You should commit to:

- **Recognising** the complex needs of families affected by drugs and alcohol and ensuring that commissioning practices reflect this
- **Delivering** local needs assessments that recognise the diverse policy agendas that family support can fulfil
- **Making** the commissioning environment accessible to local community-led providers
- **Ensuring** that family support is part of a long term commissioning strategy.

Supporting literature and further information

Although several important documents reference the needs of families, full strategic commitment at local and national levels is required to translate these initiatives into practice.

The experiences of families affected by drug and alcohol use are also discussed in the following:

- ***Drugs: protecting families and communities – the UK Drug Strategy***
HM Government
<http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk>
- ***Guidelines on psychosocial interventions (51) and opioid detoxification (52)***
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/>
- ***Hidden Harm***
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
<http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk>
- ***Recovery and drug dependency: a new deal for families***
Adfam / DrugScope 2009
www.adfam.org.uk
- ***Supporting and involving carers***
National Treatment Agency
www.nta.nhs.uk
- ***Supporting the supporters***
UK Drug Policy Commission
www.ukdpc.org.uk
- ***Think Family Guidance: DCSF, DH and NTA joint guidance for adult, children's, and drug and alcohol treatment services***
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/ig00637/>
- ***UK guidelines on clinical management***
Department of Health
www.dh.gov.uk/publicationsandstatistics
- ***We count too*** (2nd edition 2009)
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