

Journeys



Adfam

Families, drugs and alcohol

Men affected by someone else's drug/alcohol use
based on true stories from a father, a brother, a grandfather and partners

Welcome

It has long been acknowledged that women dominate the social care and support fields, both as professionals and also as clients accessing services. Women are still often seen as the primary carer in a family, but men's roles and influences – whether as a father, brother, partner or grandparent – can be just as important. So, as a man, to admit that you are having difficulty coping with a problematic situation and to ask for help can be hard. You might feel as if you are expected to cope with problems and support your family single handedly; this pressure can be particularly strong when issues of culture, tradition or religion are also involved. In some communities and families, 'asking for help' may be perceived as negating or calling into question a man's masculinity or role as provider.

Accessing support can not only help you with practical information: it can also help you to have someone to talk to and provide a safe space for you to explore how to take things forward. Talking to someone outside of your family might prompt you to see things in a different way; it might help you to understand the importance of looking after your own needs and remaining positive; and, in the long run, it can help your family overcome moments of stress and despair.

However, there will be times when you can't – or just don't want to – access support in person or over the phone. This booklet aims to provide you with some comfort and help you to remain positive. It contains real stories from men to inspire you to value your role and influence in your family. It explores how men cope and why it is good to recognise the importance of seeking support. It will also help you realise that you are not alone and your family is not the only one going through these experiences. By reaching out – or simply reading some of these stories – you might find the strength and motivation to help you move forward and support others in your family.

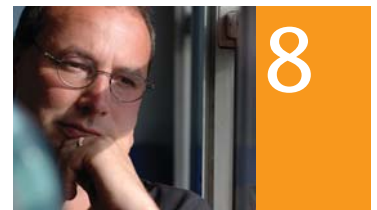
TRUE STORIES



Naz: a brother's story
'The worst thing for me was seeing my Mum so upset.'



Tony: a partner's story
'I am still keeping in touch with my children and trying to be a good role model for them.'



Robert: a partner's story
'I was isolated and, knowingly or not, Barry preyed on that.'



Peter: a father's story
'I just take each day at a time and try to stay positive.'



John: a grandfather's story
'I have to concentrate on Ella's welfare, she's too precious to lose.'

In the stories featured, names and some details have been changed and models have been used to protect people's identities

What you might be going through

As a father you might feel that it is your role and responsibility to protect your home and your family and feel pressured to resolve the situation.

You might feel at odds with what the rest of the family want and what they feel needs to be done. You might feel particularly worried about the way the problematic user is dominating the situation at home and you might be concerned that you are not devoting enough attention to your other children, who can feel neglected and think that their positive behaviour is not getting the notice it deserves. This could in turn drive them to behave badly to receive attention. You may also be turning to your children to support you and fail to see or address the impact on them.

SUBSTANCE USE

Why do young people take drugs/alcohol?

There are many reasons why young people might start to take drugs or use alcohol:

- To fit in
- To help them cope with life
- To experiment and to rebel against the status quo
- Because they are bored
- Because they're easily available
- Because of peer pressure
- Out of curiosity
- To do something risky for the sake of it
- To have fun

None of these reasons mean that a young person will necessarily go on to use drugs or alcohol regularly or problematically, or that they will get into trouble because of it. There will be a proportion of young people who go on to use drugs or alcohol quite regularly but in a controlled and recreational way.

There will be an even smaller proportion of young people that go on to develop problematic drug/alcohol use. They will depend on those drugs or alcohol to help them cope with life rather than just using them for fun; or it's possible that what started as recreational use got out of control. When problematic use sets in, drugs and/or alcohol will provide the focus to the user's life, dominate their existence or become the reason to get out of bed each day.

The reality is that problematic use affects not only users' lives, but the lives of those around them too. It is almost certain that you or other family members have been upset as a result of their use.

They might:

- Have lied to you
- Have stolen from you or the family home
- Have been abusive or violent towards you or other family members
- Not respect you or your family values
- Not respect rules, curfews, boundaries or rituals you observe in your family home
- Have used drugs in the home
- Have come home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- Be dealing drugs from your home
- Be causing problems and creating barriers between you and other family members and driving you apart.

Whatever it is you are going through, it might help to see or talk to someone – or even just pick up a leaflet or surf the web for some information. (See page 20 for contact details of useful organisations.)