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The Effect on Children living in Addictive Households

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National Context - Alcohol

- Individuals in Scotland were sold 20% more alcohol than England and Wales in 2015 (MESAS, 2016)
- Scotland's alcohol related death rate (2016) is significantly higher than the UK national average - 24 people in Scotland died of an alcohol related death in 2016 every week (NRS,2015/16)
- Alcohol related deaths in Scotland are 54% higher than in England and Wales (MESAS, 2016)
- 1 in 4 people (26%) use alcohol to hazardous or harmful levels (Scottish Health Survey, 2016)
- In over two fifths (42%) of violent crime, the victim said the offender was under the influence of alcohol (Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2016/2017)
- Approximately two thirds of referrals into Glasgow care and treatment service are in relation to alcohol use

National Context - Drugs

- In 2016, there were 867 drug-related deaths in Scotland, an increase of 22.8% and the highest number of deaths ever recorded.
- 170 drug-related deaths were recorded in Glasgow City in 2016 , an increase of 8.3% on 2015 and the highest number of deaths recorded since 1996.
- Older population (over 35), accounting for 82% DRDs. Consistent with decline in new opiate users.
- HIV outbreak
- The drugs most commonly detected when entering prison in 2016/17 were cannabis (47%), benzodiazepines (41%) and opiates (codeine, morphine, dihydrocodeine or heroin) (33%) (ScotPHO)

Prevalence of Children Affected by Parental Substance Use

- 40,000-60,000 children in Scotland may be affected by parental problematic drug use and that, of these, 10,000-20,000 may be living with that parent (Getting Our Priorities Right, 2013)
- Between 36,000 and 51,000 children are living with parents (or guardians) whose alcohol use is potentially problematic (Getting Our Priorities Right, 2013)
- In 2016, 38% of all Child Protection Registrations in Scotland highlighted Parental Substance Use as a risk factor (Scottish Government, Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland)
- Approximately 4000 children in Glasgow are affected by problematic alcohol and/or drug use who are known to services (Glasgow HSCP data, 2016)
- An audit of Significant Case Reviews over a five year period, found a prevalence of almost two thirds of parental substance misuse in SCRs (Vincent and Petch, 2012)

Significant Publications

- Scottish Executive (2001) [For Scotland's Children: Better Integrated Children's Services](#)
- Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (2003) [Hidden Harm: Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users](#)
- Scottish Executive (2003) [Getting Our Priorities Right](#)
- Scottish Government (2008) [The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem](#)
- Scottish Government (2012) [Getting it Right for Every Child](#)
- Scottish Government (2013) [Getting Our Priorities Right: Updated Practice Guidance](#)
- Scottish Government (2014) [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#)
- [Glasgow City ADP Strategy](#)

Hidden Harm (2003)

6 KEY MESSAGES:

- Estimated that there are between 250,000 and 350,000 children of problem drug users in the UK – about one for every problem drug user. This represents about 2 – 3% of children under 16 in the UK.
- Parental problem drug use can and does cause serious harm to children at every age from conception to adulthood.
- Reducing the harm to children from parental drug use should become a main objective of policy and practice.
- Effective treatment of the parent can have major benefits for the child.
- By working together, services can take many practical steps to protect and improve the health and well-being of affected children.
- The number of affected children is only likely to decrease when the number of drug users decreases.

Impact of Dependent Alcohol and/or Drug Use

- Physical and Emotional Absence
- Unpredictable Behaviour
- Financial Impact (and possible criminality)
- Associations with other alcohol and/or drug users
- Isolated, disrupted family relationships, secrecy
- Inability to respond to urgent situations whilst intoxicated
- Poor physical health
- Lack of awareness of surroundings/lack of inhibition

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Alcohol and/or drug use during pregnancy can have significant health impacts on the unborn child. Problematic parental alcohol and/or drug use can also result in sustained abuse, neglect, maltreatment, behavioural problems, disruption in primary care-giving, social isolation and stigma of children...The capability of parents/carers to be consistent, warm and emotionally responsive to their children can be undermined.

Scottish Government (2014) National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of – or failure to respond to – a child's basic emotional needs. National Child Protection Guidance for Scotland (2014)

There is considerable evidence that neglect is often linked with parental problematic alcohol and/or drug use.

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Pregnancy

- May be less likely to seek antenatal care
- Increased risk of miscarriage and stillbirth
- Premature birth and Low birth weight
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Blood Borne Virus (HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C)
 - Mother to child transmission (pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding)

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Babies and Infants

- Particularly at risk of physical and emotional neglect and/or injury due to dependence on all care needs being met by carer
- Basic physical needs not met whilst carer is under the influence
- Preoccupation with substance use may lead to poor parenting and an inability to focus on child's immediate needs
- Disrupted attachment due to poor or inconsistent parenting
- Limited stimulation or inconsistent and unpredictable parental behaviour may hinder the child's cognitive and emotional development

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Babies and Infants

- Lack of contact with other children or adults due to non-engagement (hiding) may hinder social and emotional development, and evidence suggests may lead to mental health difficulties in later life
- May become withdrawn and isolated and develop an inability to form relationships
- Financial burden of drug and/or alcohol use may lead to poor physical environment
- Irritability associated with withdrawals may increase likelihood of physical abuse, particularly in unsettled babies

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Primary School Children

- May show signs of extreme anxiety and fear of hostility as they develop coping mechanisms
- Could develop poor self-esteem and internalise their parents'/carers' problems
- Secrecy may lead to feelings of embarrassment and shame
- Isolation from peers can be common
- Parental neglect or disinterest can hinder educational attainment
- Assume parenting role for parents and younger siblings
- Increased risk of physical injury due to a lack of parental supervision
- Lack of boundaries
- Psychosomatic issues

Impact of Parental Substance Use

Older Children

- In addition to the impacts in earlier years, children coping with puberty without adequate parental support may be at increased risk of injury by parents as a result of challenging behaviours
- There is evidence of an increase of emotional disturbance and conduct disorders, including bullying
- Increased possibility of developing early difficulties with alcohol and/or drugs themselves

Protective Factors – Building Resilience

- Care and treatment for Parent(s)– move towards Recovery
- Acknowledgement of alcohol and/or drug issue and its impact on the family
- Identify and nurture relationships with non-substance using adults (family, community members, vol orgs)
- Supportive friendships
- Positive, nurturing school experiences
- Achievements

Getting Our Priorities Right (2013)

- Updated in the context of GIRFEC approach and Recovery agenda
 - Whole family recovery
 - Early intervention
- Parents can recover however children are entitled to effective support and protection
- Places a strong focus on early intervention
- Recovery outcomes can be improved for all concerned when wider family circumstances are considered
- Stigma is one of the biggest issues that can prevent individuals from recovering from problematic alcohol and/or drug use. It can mean that families are reluctant to approach services for support or to reveal the extent of their substance use - for fear of judgement or repercussions. **Role of peer support can be crucial.**

Role of Agencies working with Adults (Parents)

- Important role in identifying children living in households where parental alcohol and/or drug use is present
- Provide information and guidance to parents on the harmful effects of their substance use both to themselves and their capacity to care for children
- Be prepared to discuss sexual health and provide family planning advice
- Ask about partners, wider family and other adults visiting the home
- Share information (whether concerned or not) with other agencies
- Build Recovery Capital – individual, social, material (eg Recovery Housing, Voluntary Opportunities, Placements)