I feel sad and angry. I used to cry at night in my bed on my own. Because I didn’t like what was happening... I found it hard to sleep at night. Family life was hard and lonely.

Some young people will find it very difficult to talk about what is affecting them. One of the most powerful protective factors is for the child to have a trusted adult in their lives. Identify a member of staff who can be there for the child or young person. Build that supportive relationship and offer practical support.

Make sure you are a sound working knowledge of your organisation’s child protection policy and talk through your concerns with your manager or your ‘Children First Designated Liaison Person’. Decide on what is the most appropriate course of action.

Effective treatment and a range of other supports for children and young people are available. If you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk as a result of their parent’s alcohol or other drug use, you should inform the organisation’s child protection and welfare service.

The most important thing to do is DO SOMETHING!
Harm come to be known as Hidden alcohol and other drug use has impacted by parental problem. The experience of children and significant difference people can make a difference. Adults working with these children and young people and affect them for the rest of their lives.

The experience of children and young people living with and impacted by parental problem alcohol and other drug use has come to be known as Hidden Harm. This is because the harm children and young people experience is often hidden, or if seen, is not recognized as harm. As it is not recognised as harm, these children and young people do not get the support they need.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Hidden Harm is often concealed by shame, fear and stigma or is not picked up. Therefore, the exact number of children and young people affected by parental problem alcohol and other drug use is not known.

The research indicates, at the most conservative estimate, that 1 in 11 children and young people living in a situation where alcohol or other drug use is an issue.

Given the scale of the problem, it is crucial that we identify and support these children and young people.

I was already, at nine years old, covering up, pretending that life inside our house was as pretty. Katy aged 20.

The range of difficulties for those affected by parental problem alcohol and other drug use varies and can include enduring stress and an unpredictable home environment. Sometimes violence can become the norm in families.

Young people can have difficulty in developing trusting relationships. Their experience is that adults let them down and they have to do everything, even provide for themselves.

HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS BEING AFFECTED?

Signs to look out for Poor school attendance or late arrival - Unexplained / inadequately clothing. Homework not done - Hungry - Overly tired or over concentration. Unexplainable failure / over achieving. No money


Other things to look out for Poor self-esteem. Avoidance. Getting upset, expressing strong opinions or bravado when alcohol or drugs is discussed. Failure to get excited about events. Getting upset around holidays and birthdays. Taking holidays away from extended family.

Supportive wider network such as peers, school and community. Consistent attendance at school. Birthdays and special occasions are remembered and celebrated. Promises are kept and adults don’t let children down.

WHAT HELPS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

A stable and supportive adult in their lives, especially a parent who does not engage in problematic alcohol or other drug use.

A home high in love, routine, and attention and low in tension, stress and an unpredictable home environment. Sometimes violence can become the norm in families.

A home in love, routine, and attention and low in tension. Aggression and unpredictability.

Good support from extended family members.

This impact can have a devastating effect on these children and young people and affect them for the rest of their lives.

HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS BEING AFFECTED?

Signs to look out for Poor school attendance or late arrival - Unexplained / dirty / inadequate clothing. Homework not done - Hungry - Overly tired or over concentration. Unexplainable failure / over achieving. No money


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WHY IS BEING AFFECTED?

It is also important to be aware of parental problem alcohol and other drug use. Parents can display a lack of engagement or interest, for example, consistent lack of attendance at parents’ evenings at school. Similarly, they can show signs of being under the influence or have frequent hangovers.

There are people who can help you. You can still have a good relationship with your parents’ continued drinking or drug taking.

Resilience is defined as the capacity to transcend adversity (Gilligan, 1997).

Coping may not mean being resilient. For some, it may mean doing what you have to do to get by. (Silent Voices, 2012).

It’s important to remember that resilience is a process not a trait and is open to influence. Adults in the lives of children and young people can strengthen their resilience. You can do this by instilling in a child and a young person a sense that I HAVE... people in my life that care for me and help me.

I AM... a person with inner strengths of confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, autonomy and talent. I am proud of my identity and culture.

I CAN... manage emotions, solve problems, stick at things and think things through.

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