

“I think you need someone to show you what help there is”



Finding out about the needs of children whose parents drink too much



We asked The Children's Society, a national children's charity, to do some research about parents who drink too much and how it affects their children. These are some of the things we found.

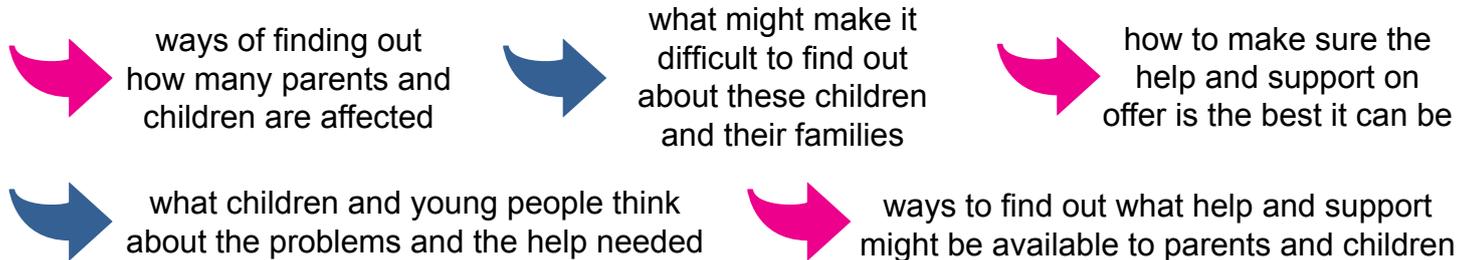


Background

In 2012, the Office of the Children's Commissioner published a report called 'Silent Voices' which told us that many children live in families where one or both parents drink too much. We didn't know how big the problem was or how people might find this out. We also didn't know much about the best ways to help these children and families.



To try to find out more, we spoke to children, parents, carers and professionals from three different parts of the country. We looked at:



Some of what we have found out

Children and young people said the most important thing for them was to tackle their parent's drinking, though they did also want support for themselves.

In some places, people running different services are getting together to find out more about children's needs. This has helped them to make better plans.

It was not easy for children or families to know where to go for help. Some professionals also don't know what services would help.

Professionals don't always know how many families are affected by alcohol and do not always spot the problems.

Children might not be aware that there is a problem because drinking alcohol is seen as a normal thing to do.

Families who have a problem with alcohol need to be offered help as soon as possible.

Children and young people don't find it easy to talk about their home lives.

Children often struggle alone and think that no other children have the same problem.

Sometimes parents don't realise, or can't admit, that they have a problem with alcohol.

People who care for those who drink don't always ask for help because they are embarrassed.

There are many good things happening already and people are happy to think differently so children get better help.

None of the children we spoke to thought that their parents' drinking was something children could get help for.

What we suggest

- Local councils should make sure that all professionals work together to find out about the problems children and families have when parents drink too much.
- Local councils should ask children, young people, parents and carers about services and involve them in plans.
- Training should be given to all those who work with children and families about the problems of parents drinking too much and how this affects children.
- Professionals should help children and young people and their families to understand that they can get help and how to find it.

What's next?

We want more people to learn about good ways of helping children and their families and to involve children and young people in this and so we will be asking all local councils to use the ideas in this report.

The ideas from this study are already helping more professionals to work together on the problems and make better plans.

We have made some suggestions to professionals which we hope will help them to find out more about children in their area who are having difficulties with parents who drink too much and how best to support them.

If you are worried about yourself, another child or someone you know you can contact **ChildLine** on 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk

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