



# HELP ME UNDERSTAND

The  
Children's  
Society

A booklet to help children, young people and workers talk about an adult's alcohol and drug treatment

[starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://starsnationalinitiative.org.uk)

# CONTENTS

About this booklet .....2

Section 1:

About me .....4

Me and my family .....5

How it feels for me .....6

Talking about your feelings .....8

Section 2:

Understanding alcohol and drug use .....10

Understanding alcohol and drug treatment .....12

Making changes .....16

Change can be difficult .....18

What is recovery? .....20

What next? .....22

Section 3:

Information for workers .....24

## About this booklet

### Information for children and young people

Lots of people drink alcohol and some people use drugs, and in some families this can make things difficult.

**This booklet is for children and young people who are affected by the alcohol or drug use of an adult in their life (like a parent or carer).**

It might be that they are getting help with their drinking or drug use. We spoke to children and young people in your situation and they said understanding alcohol and drugs and knowing what happens during treatment and how it affects you and your family would be useful. You might not be sure about what some things mean, or you might have worries about what is going to happen. It is hoped that this booklet will help answer some of your questions.

There are three sections in this booklet.

**SECTION 1** is about you and how you feel and;

**SECTION 2** aims to help you understand about treatment.

**SECTION 3** is more information for your worker.

### Information for workers

This booklet is aimed at children and young people aged 10–14, but it can be adapted to suit the child or young person you are working with.

It is intended for use with children and young people whose parent or carer is in treatment and is based on messages from other children and young people who are affected by an adult's substance misuse. It is not an assessment tool but is designed to help you have a conversation with a child or young person where there is an adult in their life who is getting help with their drinking or drug use.

You might be using this resource on its own or as a part of a larger piece of work you are doing with this child or young person or their family.

To help you with this there are some simple exercises for the child or young person to complete. They can write, draw or talk about how they feel and if you have any other resources you use in your work, you could adapt the exercises to suit these formats.

We would recommend that you read through all of the sections in this booklet before you begin and that you plan for time-out during your conversations if the need arises.

You can break this booklet down into smaller sections to suit you and the child or young person you are working with - it does not have to be completed in one session, but can be returned to at different times to best suit the situation. There is a lot of information in this booklet and you can adapt the amount of detail to suit the individual child or young person you are working with.

**A page-by-page guide for workers including resources and guidance can be found at the back of this booklet. Please read this before starting work with your child or young person.**

Remember that you will need to follow safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection procedures in relation to this booklet. Make sure that the child or young person understands what will happen if they tell you confidential information or information that raises concerns about welfare and or that of others. State this each time you use the booklet. Also decide on a safe place where the booklet will be kept and explain this to the child or young person. If, as an adult, you find anything difficult to deal with as you talk through the resource, seek support from your line manager.

# ABOUT ME

This booklet is for you. You will have the chance to talk about people that are important to you and what's happening for you at the moment. Let's start by thinking about you.

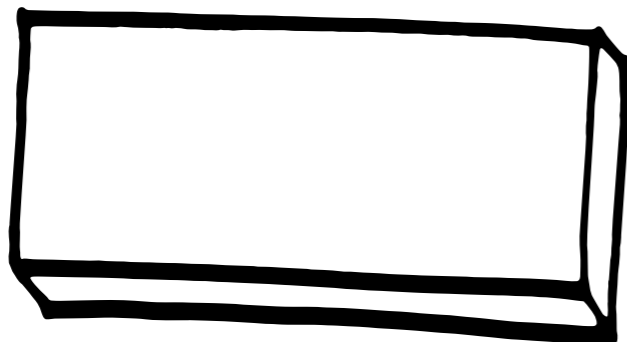
Three things I like to do

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Three words to describe me

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is...



...and this is all ABOUT ME

My favourite

My least favourite

- \_\_\_\_\_ Music
- \_\_\_\_\_ Day
- \_\_\_\_\_ Word
- \_\_\_\_\_ Colour
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson
- \_\_\_\_\_ Food

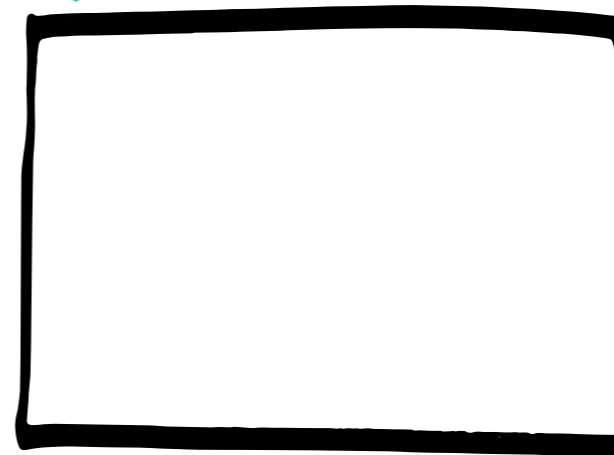
A picture, poem or photo by me



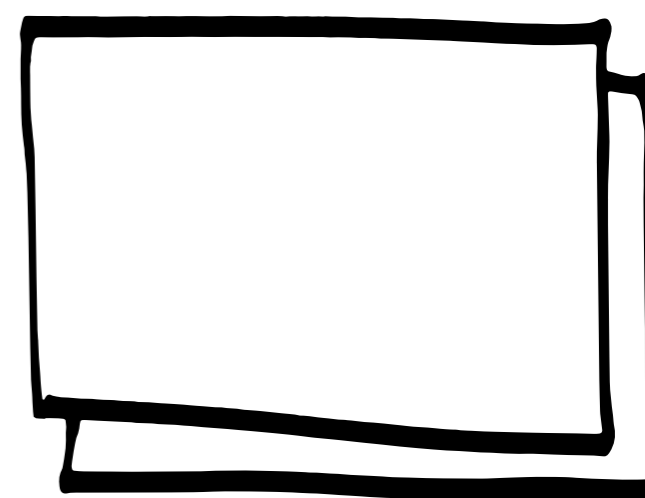
# ME AND MY FAMILY

Let's have a look at who is in your family, your friends and anyone else who is important in your life.

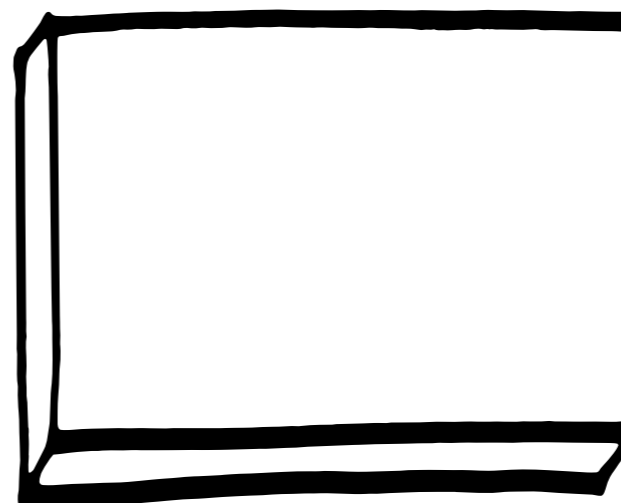
My best friends



Important adults



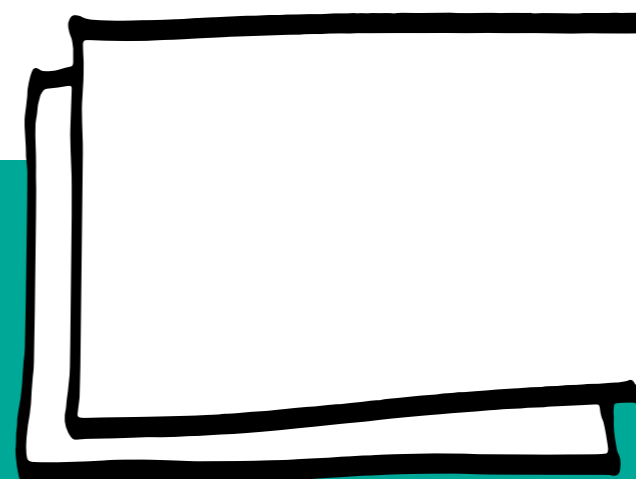
Who helps me at school



People I worry about



People who love me



My pets



# HOW IT FEELS FOR ME

**You might be thinking that there is lots of support for the adult, but what about you?** Having someone in your family who uses alcohol or drugs can be really hard. You might have felt afraid, sad, angry, confused or wished things would change. You may also have learnt not to have feelings or may not understand what they mean. Lots of children and young people have told us that they have felt ashamed and that they have kept things secret for a long time. Adults who use alcohol and drugs feel embarrassed, ashamed and keep secrets too.

Use the table below to describe how you feel and what makes you feel that way. There are a couple of examples to help you start.

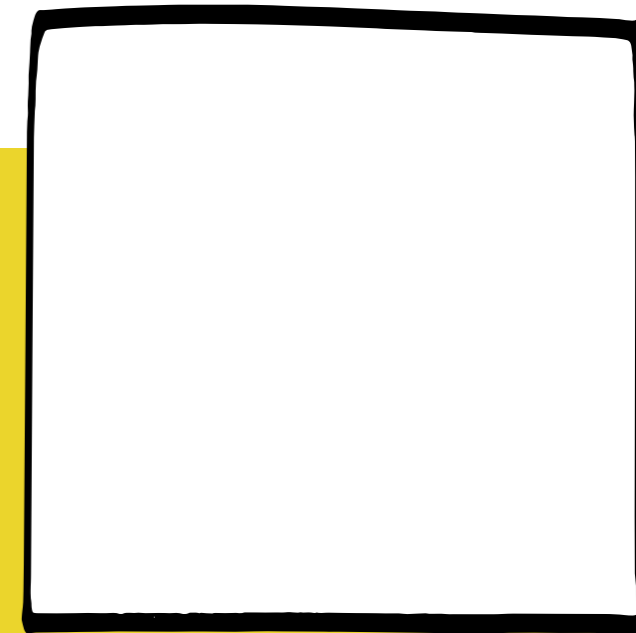
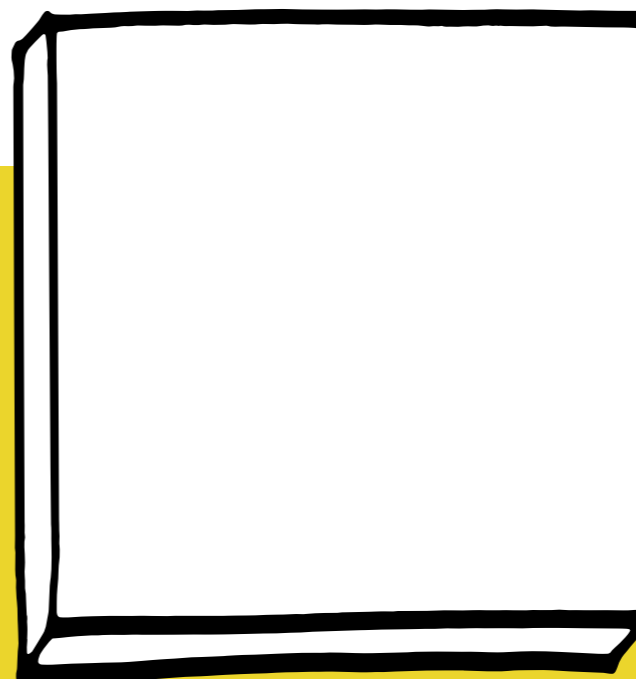
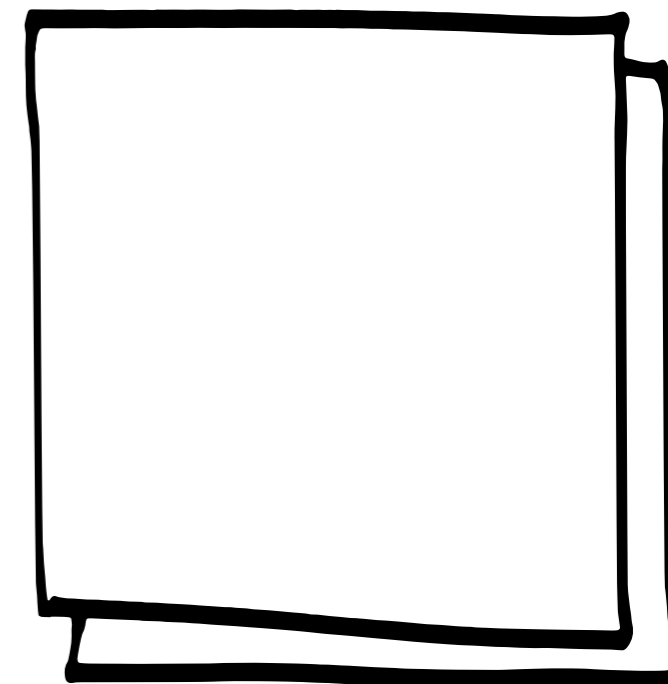
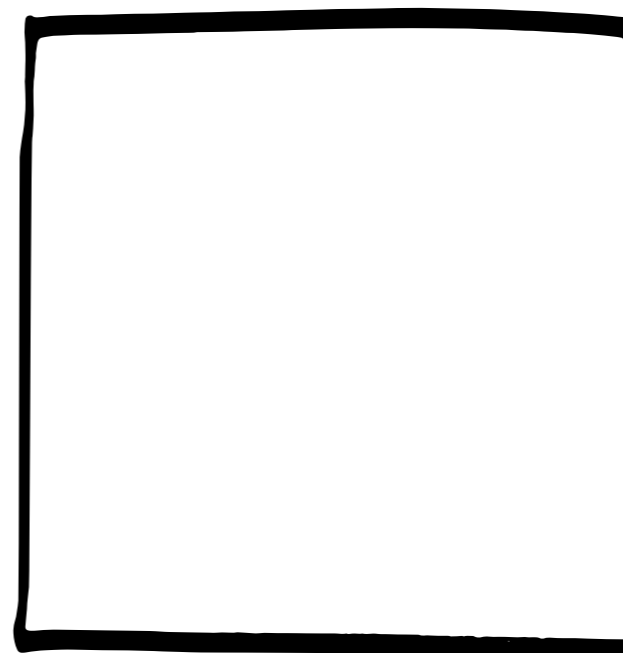
How I feel	What makes me feel that way
Angry	When people don't listen to me
Confused	When I don't understand what is happening or why

"I love you both, but when you start to drink I dislike you both."  
"I hate that you don't understand how I feel when you drink."

**If you are caring for someone else, you may stop looking after yourself as much.** This can affect your personal 'well-being' - the way you feel about things. Other children and young people care for someone else too and you can find more support at [www.babble.carers.org](http://www.babble.carers.org) or [www.makewav.es/ycif](http://www.makewav.es/ycif)

When we feel down it can help to think of happy times - this might be people, things, places you've been, animals or memories. They can stay in our heads to think about during difficult times and can help us feel a bit more positive. This is a place for your positive thoughts. You can keep coming back to read it when you need a lift.

Things that make me **😊HAPPY😊** Write or draw them here.



EXERCISE

EXERCISE



# TALKING ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS



If someone is getting treatment, it might feel strange that suddenly people are talking about things that have been kept secret in the past. If you have been keeping things secret for a long time, it can be hard to talk to people about what is happening. But getting treatment is not something to be ashamed of. Deciding to make a change is the first step for an adult, and for some adults they might think about making a change for a long time before they begin. It can take a long time to get better.

The adult might be scared about what it will be like to live without alcohol and drugs and might be feeling sad or angry about things they have done to themselves or others in the past. Wanting to go to treatment is a very brave and important step. Children and young people have told us when this is happening, they often feel worried or hopeful about what it might be like.

Children and young people say that even if they feel hopeful when their parent or carer is getting help, it can also be stressful if they feel unwell.

YOU MIGHT HAVE  
**LOTS**  
OF DIFFERENT FEELINGS



It's normal to have these feelings and they might be different on different days.

This can be a time with lots of changes, and so if things are feeling very stressful at home or school, don't forget to talk to a trusted adult about how you are feeling.

It's not always easy to find people you can trust to talk to. Perhaps you've told someone who hasn't understood, or you've asked them not to tell anyone else and they've spread it around school or where you live. This exercise will help you think about the people in your life you could talk to.

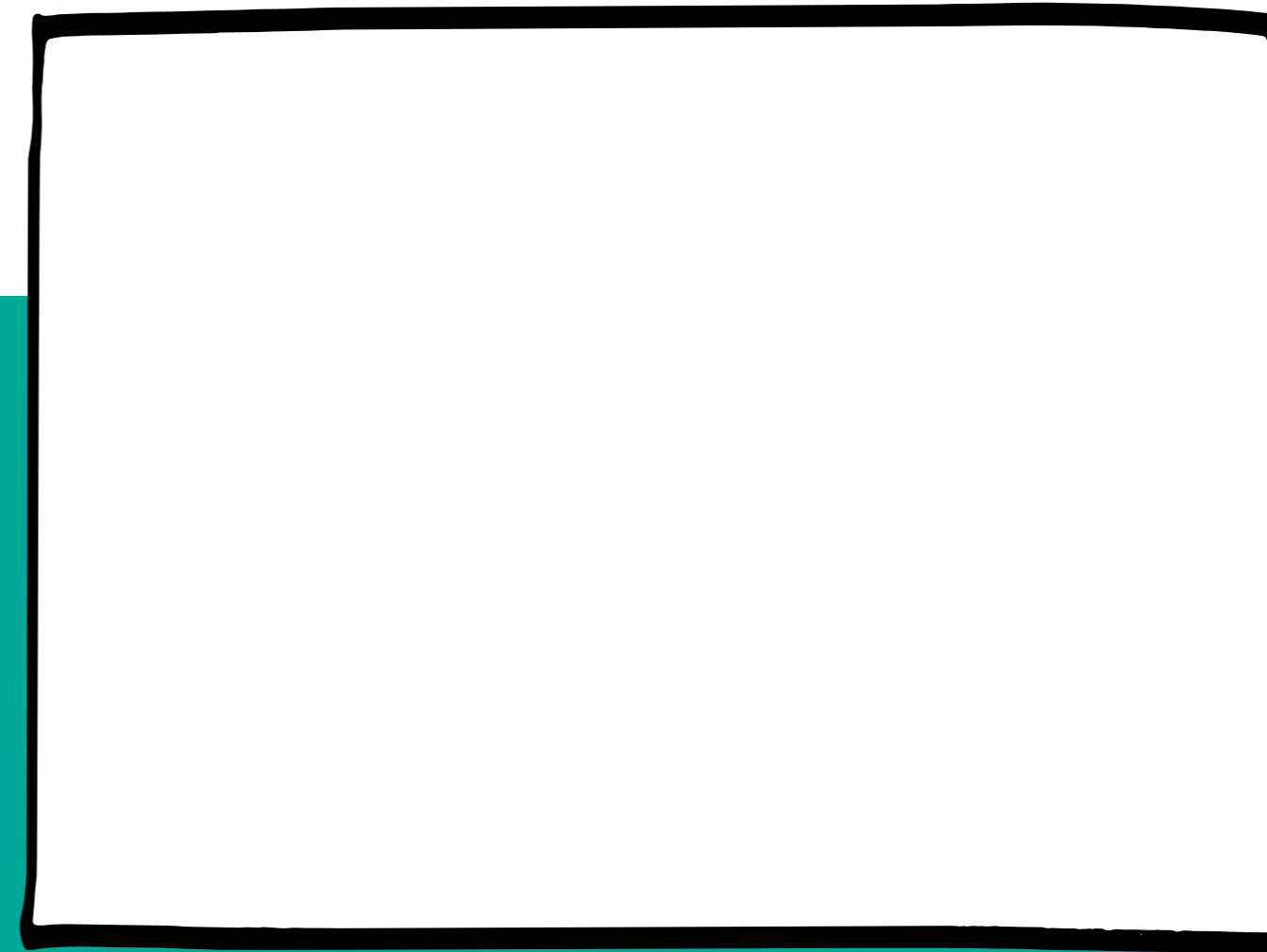
**Who do I tell about my situation?**

---

---

---

**Why are they easy to talk to?**



**"When I get angry, I don't show it in a violent way - I want to. I want to punch people, tip over tables or have a physical fight with someone. But I don't because I don't want to hurt anyone."**

# UNDERSTANDING ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE



When an adult is getting help because they drink alcohol or use drugs, you might hear words that you don't understand. You might know some already but in case you don't and to help you understand better, here is some information.

A drug is a substance that causes a mental or physical change when a person takes it into their body. It can make people change the way they feel, the way they think and the way they act. There are lots of different kinds of drugs, including alcohol.

Lots of children and young people tell us that they want to understand why people drink lots of alcohol or use drugs because it can change the way people behave and make them unwell.

This can make children and young people feel sad or anxious. It is important for you to know that people use substances for many different reasons and it might be difficult for you to fully understand. However, it is very important for you to know:

## THE 7 C'S

- I didn't **CAUSE** it
- I can't **CURE** it
- I can't **CONTROL** it
- But I can take **CARE** of myself
- By **COMMUNICATING** feelings
- Making healthy **CHOICES**
- And **CELEBRATING** myself

If the adult in your life is drinking large amounts of alcohol and taking drugs, they can become dependent. This means they are not in control and no longer able to just stop.

There are two different types of dependence:

### Psychological dependence

is when the person thinks they won't feel ok without alcohol or drugs.

### Physical dependence

means that the person's body needs alcohol or drugs to work. Without alcohol or drugs, they may start to feel very unwell.

Other words connected with dependence are:

### Tolerance

which means the body gets used to the substance so they have to take more to feel the same way.

### Withdrawal

the person may become ill or agitated when they don't have the substance.

Write down or draw what you know about the alcohol or drugs the person in your family uses.



# UNDERSTANDING ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

There are lots of reasons why an adult might decide to stop drinking or using drugs and some of these might have had a big impact upon your family. These might be because:

- They are worried about their health
- They are worried about the effect on their family
- They are pregnant
- Someone they know has poor health
- They have been ordered to by the court
- They have had enough of it

**"I said to her (mum) you need to stop drinking, because no wonder we haven't got no money. And she said that was a good point and she did it and now we can pay for the house."**

Whatever the reason for deciding to change, it takes lots of determination, strength and courage. Deciding to make a change is the first step for an adult, and for some adults they might think about making a change for a long time before they begin. It can take a long time to get better. The staff in treatment services can help adults do this. When someone has decided they need some support to reduce or stop drinking alcohol or using drugs, there are different ways they might get help.

## Treatment services

These are run by health services (hospitals or GPs) or charities and other organisations and they support people trying to reduce or stop drinking alcohol or using drugs.

## Self-help groups

You might have heard of alcoholics anonymous (AA), or other similar meetings. These are known as self-help groups where people who either have used in the past, or want to stop using alcohol or drugs meet to help and support each other.

**"This group has helped me and the other children. We have made new friends. This group is very good because it's a place where we can escape the stuff at home and feel fitted in."**

**Take some time to focus on what you think and feel.**

How do you feel about your parent or carer having treatment? Scared, worried, hopeful?

**What questions do you have?**

**Who could help you find the answers?**

## What happens in treatment?

When an adult decides to go to a treatment service, usually they have an 'assessment'. This is where a worker gathers all the information they need about the person. Then they can work out what type of help, support and medication would suit the adult best. As part of this the worker should also try and find out how you feel and to make sure you are safe. They might do this with your parent or carer or they might ask you to talk to someone else. Remember the 7 C's (see page 10). After the assessment the treatment will be broken down into stages.

### Detox

If your parent or carer is physically dependent on alcohol or drugs, they may be given medication to help stop them having withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal symptoms can make you feel very unwell (such as sweating, shaking and being sick). The medication they are given will help. In some cases detox might happen at home with the help of workers and nurses and last 10 to 14 days. Sometimes people go into hospital to do this. This might be due to where they live and other health issues. For other drugs, it is usually a few weeks or months. The first stage or control stage will be a gradual reduction or detox. This stage is where the person begins to take control over the substances they are using by reducing what they take as it is not safe for them to just stop. You may be able to encourage them at this stage by telling them how well they are doing.

Once your parent or carer is showing that they are committed to changing, they will be involved in the next stages of treatment which might include:

### One-to-one support

Your parent or carer will usually have a worker that they meet regularly to talk to. Workers are called different things in different services, but key worker or recovery worker are common names used. The worker will help them understand why they started using alcohol or drugs and what changes they might make to their lives so they don't use them in future.

**Liam's mum started to see her keyworker Kerry every Wednesday afternoon to talk about her drinking and how she was feeling. She said it helped her.**

### Group support

Lots of treatment services have groups that the adult may go to. Everyone in the group is trying to stop using alcohol or drugs, so they can share experiences and support each other. Some services have special groups for family members (including children) affected by alcohol or drug use that you may be able to attend.

### Residential rehabilitation

For a small number of people, sometimes treatment can be residential, which means the adult will live somewhere else for a few weeks to get treatment for their alcohol or drug use. This type of treatment is usually very well planned, and someone should talk to you about what will happen. It usually lasts 12 weeks and in some cases can be longer.

Different people need different amounts of support. Your parent or carer might attend a treatment service or self-help group most days, or as little as once every couple of weeks. Sometimes, there might be more than one service helping your parent or carer. This might be because there are other problems as well as alcohol or drugs, such as housing problems or mental health problems. Usually the services try to work together to make sure they get it right.

You might notice some changes in your parent or carer during treatment and afterwards. Sometimes people feel unwell while they are in detox, other times they may

feel upset about the effect their use has had on others. Usually, people start to feel a bit better.

**Priya didn't know what would happen when her Dad started treatment. She worried her Dad would have to go away for good. He was just away for a couple of weeks and she stayed with her Gran until he came home.**

**Make notes of any thoughts or questions you might have about treatment. Are there any words you don't understand?**



# MAKING CHANGES

Deciding to make a change is the first step for an adult, and for some adults they might think about making a change for a long time before they begin. Alcohol or drug treatment services and self-help groups work on this change and how the adult can begin to think, behave and act differently. Most of them work with “The Cycle of Change” and it has a few stages to it:

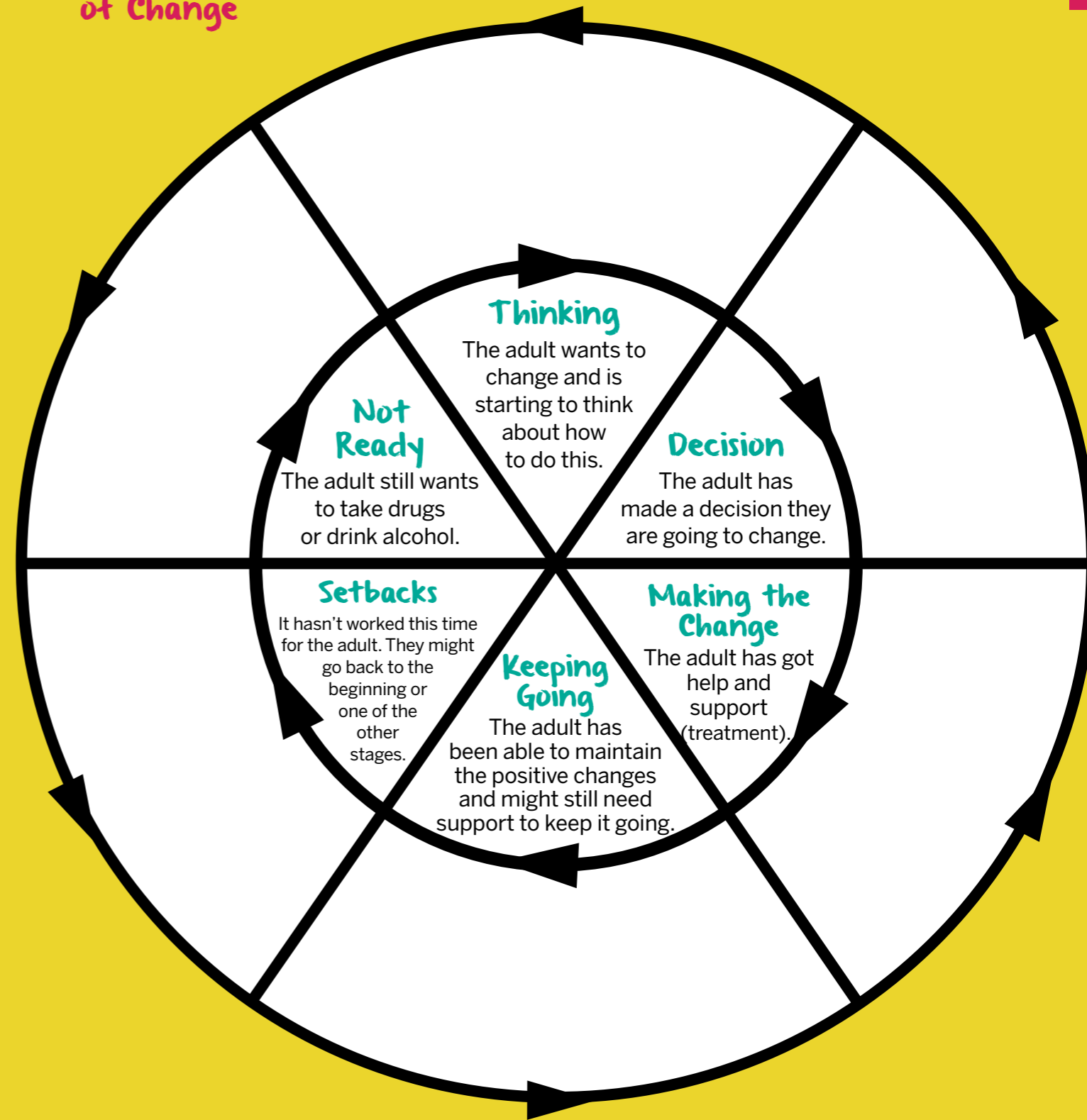
- Not ready – the adult still wants to drink alcohol or use drugs
- Thinking – the adult wants to change and is starting to think about how to do this
- Decision – the adult has made a decision they are going to change
- Making the change – the adult gets help and support (treatment)
- Keeping going – the adult has been able to maintain the positive changes and might still need support to keep it going
- Setbacks – it hasn't worked this time for the adult. They might go back to the beginning or one of the other stages

Depending upon where your parent or carer is in the cycle, this might affect how you feel and behave. Children, young people and adults have told us that making changes can have lots of ups and downs – just like a rollercoaster - it can feel like you've been there before, a bit scary or that it's never going to stop. This is normal and it's ok to feel that way.

Take a look at the diagram opposite, it has been developed from the Cycle of Change and is called the “Roller Coaster of Change.” Do you know which stage your parent or carer is at? You might want to talk this through with your worker. Think about how this makes you feel and write it down in the space next to each stage. For example, in the Making the Change stage, you might feel happy because your parent or carer has decided to seek help to change. Equally you might feel anxious because they might have to live somewhere else or might be ill for a while.

You may want to photocopy the page or create your own diagram.

## The Roller Coaster of Change



**“It's not just the parents that get hurt, it's also the kids...The children do everything in their will to help their parent because they want the best future for their parents. WE WANT OUR PARENTS BACK.”**

**“When you drink you say horrible things to each other, that hurts me too.”**

# CHANGE CAN BE DIFFICULT

Different people take different amounts of time to stop using, or to start feeling better.

Lots of people go into treatment more than once before they stop using for good. Your parent or carer might have been through treatment more than once or they might be going into treatment for the first time. They might attend for a while, stop for a while and then go back later. Treatment services always welcome people back even if they have dropped out in the past. Each time they return to a service, they will have more skills to help them stop using, even if they don't stop just yet.

The main thing is that it is not your fault. Children and young people have told us that they should have done something different and feel to blame. Nothing you have done made your parents or carers go back to using alcohol or drugs, even if they say it is when they are angry. It can be very hard to trust that things will ever be different, especially if you have felt hopeful before and been disappointed. However much you want things to change, only the person seeking help and support can make that happen.

**What are the things I can control at the moment?  
What can't I control?**

When things are changing don't forget that you need support too – talk to a trusted adult.

*"It's made a big difference. I've got somebody to talk to about my feelings and things. I can talk to my mum and my family, but I've got somebody else to talk to as well."*

*"This group has made me feel a better person towards my mum and made me understand what she is going through."*

**When I talk about my situation, I feel...**

# WHAT IS RECOVERY?

You might have heard the word “recovery” and in fact, the service your parent or carer attends might be called a recovery service and they could have a recovery worker.

Someone who has stopped using alcohol or drugs may say that they are ‘in recovery’. People who are ‘in recovery’ usually don’t use any alcohol or drugs at all, but this is not the same for everyone. Recovery is different for everyone.

What does recovery mean to you?

EXERCISE

Lots of children and young people hope that once their parent or carer is in recovery life will be easier for everyone. We hope so too. However, this time can be difficult too. Remember the roller coaster idea – ups and downs. Lots of families have ups and downs. This might be a time where you are learning to live together in a different way. Things might take time to get used to. The way your parent or carer behaves at home might change.

What changes have you noticed?

Jake is 13 and has got used to looking after his younger brother and making the rules. He found it really hard when his mum was feeling better and started to tell him what to do.

EXERCISE



# WHAT NEXT?



This booklet has looked at how your parent or carer's alcohol or drug use affects you and the questions and feelings you may have about it. We hope it has also given you the chance to talk about alcohol or drug treatment and helped you understand a little more about what is happening. You can come back and read this booklet whenever you need to.

**Remember that what is happening in your life is happening to other children and young people too and none of it is your fault.**

You are really important and have the right to information, the right to feel supported and the right to feel safe. Although it might not feel like it, your situation will change because you will grow up and have more choices.

The fact that you have a parent or carer who drinks too much or uses drugs does not need to stop you doing things or limit what you can do in your future. You can choose to be different.

To help with the situation you are in right now, other children and young people have found these ideas on the opposite page helpful:

## If you want to talk about how you feel

It's good to have someone to talk to but choosing someone can be hard. Some children and young people can talk to parents or carers but some can't. You could talk to someone at school like your teacher, lunchtime supervisor, school nurse or the person that gave you this booklet.

If you don't want to talk to someone who knows you, you can call Childline on **0800 1111** or visit **www.childline.org.uk**

There are also websites especially for children and young people who are affected by their parent's alcohol or drug use.

- Children of addicted parents and people (Coap) at **www.coap.org.uk**
- The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa) at **www.nacoa.org.uk**
- You may also find it helpful to share experiences with other young people who look after someone in their family at **www.makewav.es/ycif**

**"Everything seems to be about you, I always feel forgotten about."**

## If you don't feel safe

Being safe means not being in danger and being looked after (like having enough food, heat or clothes in your home). If your parent or carer drinks too much or takes drugs, things might happen to you or around you that make feel unhappy or unsafe.

If someone is hurting you, being violent or doing dangerous things phone the police on **999** or an adult you trust.

Remember you can always call ChildLine on **0800 1111** or visit **www.childline.org.uk**

## Where do I go for help?

Make a list of your useful contacts here...

# INFORMATION FOR WORKERS

The following page-by-page guide aims to give you useful information, guidance and resources as you work through the booklet.

For other useful practice tools, please see our website at [www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk)

## ○ Page 4 - About me

This opening exercise gives the child or young person time to think about themselves and the opportunity to talk about things important to them. You may have already carried out an exercise like this but this gives you the chance to revisit or expand on it. It is important for the child to feel comfortable, safe and trust you.

## ○ Page 5 - Me and my family

This page gives you an opportunity to talk with the child or young person about the important relationships in their lives – whether family, friends or other carers. It also gives you the chance to identify and discuss the person (or people) in the child or young person's life who has issues with substance misuse and what their worries are.

You may have already undertaken a similar exercise with the child or young person as part of your assessment process, so this is an opportunity to revisit. You may also like to consider creating a genogram to explore relationships in more depth.

## ○ Page 6/7 - How it feels for me

For children and young people, having a parent or carer who drinks alcohol or uses drugs, can be a very painful and traumatic experience. They may have never learnt about emotions or even understood them. Use this exercise to talk through their feelings and look at what is triggering them. You could explore each emotion and discuss options to deal with it as well as talking about the difference between constructive and destructive ways of coping with feelings. You could also discuss emotions which are caused by things the child or young person can control and those that they can't. You could talk about the things they may feel responsible for and reinforce the message that a parent's alcohol or drug use is not their fault.

You may also be able to identify the things that make the child or young person feel good and how they might be able to do more of those things during the weeks or months ahead. Talk about what help they might need to be able to do those things.

You could use the exercise on page 7 to talk about the fact that having positive well-being does not mean that they won't experience feelings or situations that they find difficult. You could talk about resilience - the ability to cope and recover when times are tougher than usual. Protective factors that contribute towards resilience include close relationships with family and friends, the ability to manage strong feelings, having a positive view of yourself, feeling in control, being able to seek help and finding positive meaning in your life. You could use this exercise to explore resilience further including what makes them feel happy. Rethink Mental Illness has a lot of resources around well-being and resilience. Visit [www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/wellbeing-physical-health](http://www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/wellbeing-physical-health) and [www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/young-people/looking-after-your-mental-health](http://www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/young-people/looking-after-your-mental-health)

For young carer resources please visit [www.youngcarer.com](http://www.youngcarer.com)

## ○ Page 9 - Talking about your feelings

It is likely that the child or young person you are talking to will be feeling a huge mixture of emotions. Having someone listen to your worries can be very powerful, and it might be the first time they have spoken about it in any detail – this takes a lot of courage. It may make them upset or it might be upsetting for you to hear how hard it is for them; this is OK. Make sure you have the time and space set aside to have these conversations and have thought about what you will do if there are any safeguarding concerns. You both might need a break before returning to other activities.

To find out more about parental substance misuse, and its impact on children, see The Children's Society's awareness-raising and training DVD resource 'Ask me about me' available via

[www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk)

or our booklet "You are not on your own" which is specific to parental alcohol use at

[www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk/content/you-are-not-your-own-booklet](http://www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk/content/you-are-not-your-own-booklet)

## ○ Page 11 - Understanding alcohol and drug use

You don't need to be an expert in alcohol or drugs to talk through this book, but if you do want the most up to date information regarding substances, their effects and legal status please visit

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) or [www.drugscope.org.uk/resources/drugsearch/](http://www.drugscope.org.uk/resources/drugsearch/)

In addition, if you haven't already done so, make contact with your local drug and alcohol service and talk to them as they will have information/leaflets and may even deliver training.

The 7C's were developed by the Betty Ford Centre to help children understand that family addiction is not their fault. For more information and resources for children and families visit

[www.bettyfordcenter.org/family-and-children/index.php](http://www.bettyfordcenter.org/family-and-children/index.php)

## ○ Page 12 - Understanding alcohol and drug treatment

Take some time to talk about how the child or young person feels about their parent or carer receiving support and being in treatment. They may be feeling a huge range of emotions or may not know what to think at all. Both of these are fine, and make sure you have time set aside to allow them to work through their thoughts and emotions.

You could use the exercise boxes as a starting point for discussions. Other children and young people have shared their experiences and you could look at websites including [www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk) [www.nacoa.org.uk](http://www.nacoa.org.uk) [www.coap.org.uk](http://www.coap.org.uk)

If you need further information you can talk to your local Drug and Alcohol service.



## INFORMATION FOR WORKERS (Continued...)

### ○ Page 15 - What happens in treatment?

There are different types of treatment and you might want to talk about to the child or young person about the type their parent or carer will be receiving. You could discuss how they might talk to their parent or carer about their treatment. What would be the best way to do this? What support might they need to do it? You may want to explore how the child or young person will be cared for while their parent or carer is undergoing treatment. If the parent or carer needs to go away from home for their treatment, what extra support will they need? Who could the child or young person go to if they have questions about their parent's or carers treatment?

Try to think of everyone that will be able to help and make a list of useful names and numbers. You may feel it is appropriate for the child or young person to record this information on a separate piece of paper to take away with them. Remember you can talk to your local Drug and Alcohol Service or for further information or visit Public Health England [www.nta.nhs.uk](http://www.nta.nhs.uk)

### ○ Page 16/17 - Making changes

We all live with and have to manage change in our lives. Most of our work is focused on bringing about positive change for the children and families we work with. Explaining and understanding the process of change and how someone makes changes in their behaviour is key. The "Cycle of Change" model developed by Prochaska and Di Clemente in 1982 is the most commonly used in alcohol and drug services. Change is different for everybody and can take different amounts of time. So while this parental change is taking place, it is important to understand the child's perspective and experience of this change. In 2006, Fiona Harbin wrote a chapter in Secret Lives\* where through 'The Roller Coaster of Change' she highlighted that the child's experiences are likely to be at odds with those of the parent or carer. This is reflected in the diagram by arrows going in opposite directions. Therefore it is essential during this period to understand, assess and regularly review.

You may want to use the diagram in this booklet or recreate something yourself that enables you to talk to the child or young person about how they are feeling or how they think they might feel during the different stages of the process. Will there be times when they are confused? Happy? Worried? Hopeful? How might they feel if it takes longer than they had hoped? If their parent or carer has been through treatment more than once, you may want to explore how they have felt about that in the past. Have they felt angry? Disappointed? Sad? Have they felt guilty that their parent has dropped out of treatment? Children and young people need to know that this is not their fault – make sure you spend time talking about this and letting them know that the people will still be there to help when their parent or carer is ready to try again.

\* Secret Lives: growing with substance. Working with children and young people affected by familial substance misuse. Edited by Fiona Harbin & Michael Murphy.

### ○ Page 18/19 - Change can be difficult

As highlighted earlier in the booklet adults use alcohol and drugs for many reasons – whether it's an illness or a coping mechanism. Whatever the reason you need to be non-judgemental, supportive and listen to the child. It is very important to help them to understand that if treatment hasn't worked this time, it is not their fault. Children and young people say that being told that it is not their fault is a very important message for them to hear. Make sure that you spend time talking about this. You could also discuss what the next steps might be and what additional support they may need.

Talk to them about how they feel now and what might help them to feel better. There are a number of things that can help a child or young person to have a more positive future. Identify something they are good at or interested in and use this to encourage positive friendships or activities and find positive role models. Doing this builds self-esteem and helps children and young people feel they have choices and some control in their life. Positive experiences at school or social clubs can increase a child or young person's self-esteem and ability to cope.

### ○ Page 20/21 - What is recovery?

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) Recovery Committee believes that recovery is more than overcoming alcohol and drug dependence and covers a number of domains, which if not addressed, may reduce a person's ability to recover. The social capital domain is about relationships with family, including children. It is important to think about children and families in recovery. How can you help them to be part of recovery? Talk to the Recovery Worker at your local Drug and Alcohol Service. It is important for children and families to recover in their own right.

You might want to talk about how Jake might be feeling before moving on to discuss the things that are different for the child or young person. They still might need support in their own right.

### ○ Page 23 - What next?

You might want to talk to the child or young person about what they would do if they felt unsafe or who they might talk to. You could role-play this situation and it might be useful to make a list of names and numbers for the child or young person to take away with them.

If you have any child protection concerns then you need to follow your local child protection protocol. Your agency should have a folder which has the protocol clearly written down and should advise you on what to do. Some agencies (like schools) have a named person, so contact them first. Seek support from your line manager if you are unsure about what to do. Often drinking or drugs misuse doesn't come in isolation and there may be additional issues such as domestic abuse or mental health issues. For information about this visit the following websites:

[www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://www.starsnationalinitiative.org.uk) ▲ [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) ▲ [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)  
[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parentscarers/parentalmentalillness.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parentscarers/parentalmentalillness.aspx)

You can't solve all of a child or young person's problems, but by listening to them and working through this booklet you have already made an important difference.



## About The Children's Society

It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect.

The Children's Society is a national charity that runs crucial local services and campaigns to change the law to help this country's most vulnerable children and young people.

[childrenssociety.org.uk](http://childrenssociety.org.uk)

## About Stars National Initiative

The Children's Society's Stars National Initiative is a hub of information, guidance and resources on parental alcohol and drug use, and the impact it has on children and families.

Through our work we promote the voices of children and young people, seek to influence policy and practice, and undertake training and consultancy work.

We provide a wide range of information and resources, including a website and e-newsletter, booklets, practitioners' tools and our 'You are not on your own' booklet, worksheets and 'Ask me about me' DVD.

### Further information and resources:

[starsnationalinitiative.org.uk](http://starsnationalinitiative.org.uk)

[youngcarer.com](http://youngcarer.com)

### Contact details

Stars National Initiative email:  
[sni@childsoc.org.uk](mailto:sni@childsoc.org.uk)

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the children and young people who attend the CHHAT Project and shared their feedback, experiences and quotes with us. The CHHAT (Community Hidden Harm Awareness Team) Project is a community based project in Essex (delivered by The Children's Society), funded by The Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. Thank you also to the following groups and individuals for their feedback: Aquarius Birmingham Young People's Service, Aquarius Kinship Service, the West Midlands Regional Forum (facilitated by Adfam) which represents services supporting families affected by a loved one's drug or alcohol use, Eva Acs, Cambridgeshire, Dean Godfrey and

members of the Pan London Parental Substance Misuse Forum, and Carolyn McDonald, Consultant.

\* Exercises in this booklet were inspired by Up Facts To Stop You Feeling Down, a resource book published in 2004 by Leeds-based project Base 10 (Turning Point.)

We also welcome feedback on this resource.

Written by:

**Joanna Manning and Caroline Horst,  
The Children's Society.**