

Supporting families affected by drug and alcohol misuse



What is the initiative?

Explore Family in Nottingham

Who runs it?

It is led by Lifeline Project Ltd (a drug and alcohol treatment service for adults) in partnership with The Children's Society.

Who does it benefit?

Children, young people and adults affected by someone else's drug or alcohol misuse.

What does it do?

The intervention delivers both low threshold and structured interventions for anyone affected by the drug or alcohol misuse of someone else in their family. The service works with children within the family (some of whom will be young carers), any non-misusing parent and the misusing parent when appropriate.

Led by an adult drug and alcohol treatment service working with two experienced children's workers seconded into the service, this initiative brings together the knowledge, skills and experience from both the adult and children's sector to deliver a new whole family approach model that looks at how substance misuse affects the whole family.

When did it start?

2013.

Why was it started?

Previous support services in Nottingham were commissioned to work separately with individuals – either young carers or adult carers. However, services were not integrated into the treatment system and therefore not connected up.

This new approach was commissioned in autumn 2012 by Nottingham Crime and Drugs partnership (CDP) to deliver a whole family response to drug and alcohol misuse that is embedded within the treatment service and is part of the recovery agenda.

The initiative is grounded in the experience and knowledge from Lifeline Project Ltd and The Children’s Society Stars Project (which ran from 2002–2010 and supported children affected by parental substance misuse), as well as from Stars National Initiative, a hub of information, guidance and resources on children and families affected by substance misuse. The model was also informed through The Children Society’s Include Programme and the idea that children care because an adults’ needs are unmet.

What are the aims and objectives?

Explore Family will deliver a high impact model, combining personalised care with proven evidence based programmes. It aims to support and work with families, children of parents misusing substances, carers and anyone affected by someone else’s substance misuse. It aims to address the negative impact of substance misuse on families and improve family functioning. Its goal is also to have a positive impact on the recovery of the person who is misusing substances.

Specific outcomes include:

- Improved health and wellbeing of service users.
- Improved relationships, family functioning and social functioning.
- Young people are supported to feel safer.
- Families have good access to support.
- Young carers are less isolated and reduced incidences of bullying.
- Raised awareness and reduced stigma of substance use and the impact on families.
- Improved attendance and attainment for young people.

How is it funded?

Explore Family is funded through Nottingham CDP.

What has it achieved?

“Accessible materials produced by people who know what they are talking about.”

Quote from evaluation of Stars National Initiative 2011

As this is still a new intervention, it is too early to know clear outcomes.

The service however will use a range of evidence based measures, such as the 5-Step Model, the Young People’s Outcomes Star, and The Bridge Carer Support Outcome Profile.

To date, 50 referrals have been made to the project and have come from a range of referral sources, including schools and children's social care. Referrals have been for children aged 5–16 and already it is clear that some of these children are young carers. There has been a wide range of level of need and although there has been a mix of referrals for both substance misuse and alcohol issues, referrals have predominantly been for children affected by parental alcohol misuse.

Although it is too early to cite any outcomes from this new intervention, an evaluation of the Stars National Initiative has showed that the resources on the website had helped professionals be more aware of how parental substance misuse affects children and young people and had assisted professionals in recognising and responding to their needs. The work was recognised as informing and shaping the development of policy and practice and the resources available on the website were recognised as being successful in helping young people's voices to be heard.

How have carers been involved in planning and delivering this work?

The service model has been developed and based upon what children and families have been telling The Children's Society and Lifeline Project Ltd over a number of years and Explore Family will continue to consult with service users on the development of the service.

How is the initiative run?

The partnership is led and managed by Lifeline Project Ltd with support and input from The Children's Society. There are seven staff in total; one Manager, two Adult Family Workers, two Children and Family Workers, an Administrator and a Volunteer Co-ordinator. The two Children's Workers are employed by The Children's Society, who provides clinical supervision and strategic input, and they are seconded into Lifeline Project Ltd. The service is commissioned to support 540 adults in low and structured support and plans to work with up to 120 children and young people (not all will be young carers). It plans to recruit volunteers to a range of roles in the service including peer mentors, mentors and therapists.

The service has an office base in the city of Nottingham, with open access and satellites in key agencies such as the adult treatment service – Recovery in Nottingham – local schools and childrens centres.

Existing referral pathways and joint working agreements such as those that existed with the former generic young carers service, adult service and young people's substance misuse services are being amended and established for this new service. Referrals can be for either individual adults or for children affected by a family member's substance misuse. However, the service is increasingly working towards receiving referrals for the whole family, by working with agencies such as childrens centres that work with families.

Referrals are followed by individual assessments that also look at the whole family, where appropriate. Where adult carers for example, are referred, consideration is given as to whether there are any children who are affected by substance misuse and whether they have a caring role.

Following assessment, both adult and children's workers come together to look at the family as a whole and to develop individual support plans as well as a whole family support plan and support package. This ensures that needs are considered in one place and are linked into the substance misuser's recovery plan where appropriate. It must be noted however that some people will choose to be worked with on an individual basis only.

The service delivers both preventative and targeted support. Preventative support will deliver interventions at low thresholds and include brief advice, telephone support and group work. Targeted structured interventions include one-to-one work and family support over a longer period of time as required. This may include supporting non-using parents to support their children. This work is complemented by peer support, mentoring and mutual aid (structured support from others who are being supported) and sessional therapists around play and family therapy.

The service will also benefit from the information and resources developed through Stars National Initiative and be key in the design and development of further resources to support both children and families directly, as well as practitioners.

Awareness of the project has been raised through stakeholder events, newsletters, leaflets and directly to the agencies who referred to the former providers. A website, Facebook page and Twitter account have also been established.

What methods have been particularly effective?

The unique selling point of this intervention is the best practice and the experience of staff brought together by the partnership between Lifeline Project Ltd, a predominantly adult treatment service, with a children's charity – The Children's Society Stars National Initiative.

Have there been any challenges along the way?

The timescale for establishing the new service was short and although very challenging, was met.

Although this is a new service, there were elements of the service being provided through an adult carers service and a generic young carers service. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations was therefore applied which can be a very difficult and demanding process for all parties.

What hints and tips might help me get started?

- For a smooth transition from one delivery model to a new model it is essential to identify a project lead to develop an implementation plan and to co-ordinate activity in order to ensure that all parties are on track to deliver and commence on the agreed date.
- Regular communication with all key stakeholders is essential during the service transition, implementation and beyond.

Are there any useful documents that could assist me?

The Explore Family website www.explorefamily.org.uk.

The **Lifeline Project Ltd** service website.

A wide range of resources for professionals working with children and families affected by parental substance misuse can be found on the **Stars National Initiative website** including:

- E-newsletters promoting good practice and information on existing provision and support.
- Ask Me About Me DVD, which enables voices to be heard and increases the capacity to recognise and respond to needs.
- You Are Not On Your Own booklet, which increases capacity to recognise and respond.
- Swept under the Carpet briefing paper, which informs and has shaped the development of policy and practice.
- Practice guidance and protocols.

Where can I get further information?

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