

1

BACKGROUND

'Parental substance misuse' is the long-term misuse of drugs and/or alcohol by a parent or carer. This includes parents and carers who: consume harmful amounts of alcohol (for example if their drinking is leading to alcohol-related health problems or accidents) are dependent on alcohol, use drugs regularly and excessively, are dependent on drugs.



**SAFEGUARDING
ADULTS
BRADFORD**

Children of Parents who Misuse Substances

2

WHY IT MATTERS

If a parent is concerned with funding an addiction, or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they are unlikely to be able to meet a child's physical, emotional and developmental needs consistently. Children can also be at an increased risk of neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, either by the parent or because the child becomes more vulnerable to abuse by others.

7

WHAT TO DO

If you are concerned that a parent's or someone who is soon to be a parent and substance misuse is or may impact their ability to care for their child and that the child is at risk of abuse or neglect, you can report your concern: [Safer Bradford - Report a Concern](#)



3

INFORMATION

It is important not to generalise or make assumptions. Parents who misuse substances can be good parents who do not abuse or neglect their children. Professionals should be aware that there are factors that reduce the risk of harm to a child*. However, focus on the child's welfare should be a priority for professionals and the impact of the parental substance misuse on the child should be assessed without delay.

6

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS?

Many adults misusing substances often have a range of complex needs and these will need to be addressed and supported. This can be achieved through appropriate treatment to meet their needs accessed through the local drug and alcohol treatment service:

<https://humankindcharity.org.uk/service/new-vision-bradford/>

5

INTERVENTION

Successful interventions to support families affected by parental substance misuse should use a holistic approach to look at and improve a family's: day-to-day functioning, psychological functioning, parent-child relationships social factors (such as the family's network, housing and financial situation) (Altobelli and Payne, 2014; Bogg, 2013; Cleaver, Unell and Aldgate, 2011).

Remember the child's perspective should always be prioritised.

4

INFORMATION

Parents who misuse substances may also be experiencing other issues such as mental health problems and domestic abuse. The 'multiplicative' impact of combinations of factors have been found to increase the risk of harm to children. Professionals need to be mindful of how these issues interlink and assess the impact of issues both together and separately to ensure the interventions put in place are as effective as possible in promoting the safety and wellbeing of all members of a household.