



Adfam



Combating Drugs Partnerships: Guidance to services on involving families

JULY 2023

This guidance has been written by Adfam, in collaboration with alliance of family support organisations in England.



INTRODUCTION:

Combating Drugs Partnerships were established to ensure coordination across different local delivery partners, providing a setting for understanding and addressing shared challenges related to substance use and improving practice. These partnerships should be visible and accountable for their actions, both to local residents and central government. This guide outlines why the voice of families affected by substance use should be included within these multi-agency forums and how frontline services can go about recruiting and supporting families once they are involved.



Importance of involving families affected by substance use:

Research by Adfam estimates that almost 1 in 10 adults across Great Britain are negatively affected by the drinking or drug use of a family member or friend, many of whom face extensive challenges, yet whose voices often go unheard.

The Government's Commissioning Quality Standard for drug and alcohol treatment has formally recognised those with lived experience to be 'people affected by their own or other people's drug or alcohol use, including children, families, carers, friends and communities'.

Furthermore, the Government's Guidance on Combating Drugs Partnerships states that 'The voices and full involvement of people who have experience of drug-related harm are

an essential part of this partnership, including people who use (or have used) drugs, their family members, family members of those who have died or been killed as a result of involvement in drugs and, more broadly, local residents or businesses affected by drug-related harm.'

Therefore, it's important that families are involved in Combating Drugs Partnerships as key stakeholders, so that their voices are heard, their experiences are understood, and their

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specific needs are recognised and acted upon within your local area. It may not always be apparent to the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) or people facilitating the Partnership that family members should be involved, and services can play an important role in engaging SROs to emphasise the importance of this and impact they can have.

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Supporting families once they are involved:

Being involved in a Partnership can be a daunting prospect, as family members may not have experience of being involved in a body such as this, or knowledge of local structures and some of the local stakeholders that are involved. Supporting them through this process will be important and we would recommend briefing them properly beforehand so they know what is involved, along with regular check-ins once their involvement starts to find out how they are doing and make sure they are happy with their role. You may also wish to consider offering training for families to be an effective member of a Partnership, to help them develop their skills around advocacy, public speaking and knowledge of local structures.

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We recommend nominating more than one family member, to ensure a more supported environment and better representation. In addition to the central group within the Partnership, there may also be sub-groups and working groups, focussing on particular issues relating to substance use, where family members could be involved.

It is also important to note that whilst services can play an important role in identifying, recruiting and supporting family members to be involved with the Partnerships, the family members shouldn't be seen as representatives of the service. Instead, they should be put forward as representatives of themselves and others with their shared experience.

Services also have a key role to play in advocating and making the case for families to be involved within the Combating Drugs Partnerships. Having an evidence base supported by data that you have collected within your service around supporting families is a powerful and effective means to achieve this. This data could include the number of family members that have accessed and received support from your service, and outcomes measured from the support provided.

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CHECKLIST

01 Have you been in touch with the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) or people organising the Combating Drugs Partnership (CPD) in your local area about family members being involved?

02 Have you identified family members within your service who would be suitable representatives on the CDP, taking into account diversity and inclusion?

03 Have you considered how you might offer ongoing support to family members that you are putting forward to be on the local CDP, and any sub-groups within the structure?

04 Have you considered the prospect of proposing a professional from your service to be represented on the CPD, as another means of promoting the needs of family members?

05 Are you in contact with any other services that support families affected by substance use, such as family services, substance use, carer's, domestic abuse, social services, early help, family hubs and foodbanks, and have you considered working collaboratively to promote the needs of families within CDPs?

06 Have you shared relevant data, for example the number of family members accessing your service, to provide an accurate insight into the scale of the issue?

About Adfam

Adfam is a national charity tackling the negative effects of drugs and alcohol on family members and friends. We improve life for thousands of people. Our mission is to do this by:

- empowering families and friends affected by drugs, alcohol or gambling to get the support they need.
- building the confidence, capacity and capability of frontline practitioners to provide effective services.
- influencing decision-makers to understand the needs of thousands of people coping with the effects of a family member or friend misusing alcohol or drugs, or gambling.

We would like to thank the Joint Combating Drugs Unit, and our alliance partners from family support organisations working in England for their support, and input into this guidance.

Get in touch



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