



## **Alcohol and Families Alliance**

### **Response to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Alcohol-use disorders Consultation – August 2022**

#### **What are the key areas for quality improvement that you would want to see covered by this quality standard?**

##### **A: Key area for quality improvement**

Improved public awareness on the impact alcohol has on families and relationships with others, and to challenge stigma.

##### **A: Why is this a key area for quality improvement?**

Despite the prevalence of alcohol in society, alcohol dependence is heavily stigmatised. Stigma can play a damaging role in preventing those who have a drinking problem, and their families, from coming forward and asking for help.

There needs to be more awareness amongst the general public about the damage stigma does to people and their families impacted by alcohol dependence, and to help people to be more understanding and sympathetic in their language and approach.

##### **A: Supporting information**

Research from Adfam shows that stigma can be a powerful block to seeking support, and that some families effectively stigmatise themselves through feelings of guilt and low self-worth.

[https://adfam.org.uk/files/docs/adfam\\_challenging\\_stigma.pdf](https://adfam.org.uk/files/docs/adfam_challenging_stigma.pdf)

##### **B: Key area for quality improvement**

Training and support to professionals working in frontline services to recognise those struggling with a family member's alcohol use

##### **B: Why is this a key area for quality improvement?**

Workforce development of practitioners in drug and alcohol treatment, and other frontline services, is key in ensuring that families negatively impacted by alcohol are supported as well as possible.

Practitioners that are likely to come into contact with people affected by a family member's drinking should have access to training and resources to help them identify and support

families affected in this way, and equip practitioners with the relevant tools and knowledge to help families sensitively or to signpost onto specialist services.

### **C: Key area for quality improvement**

Greater outreach to ensure families affected by alcohol know where support is available and how they can access it

#### **C: Why is this a key area for quality improvement?**

Family members affected by the alcohol use of a loved one often don't self-refer to services, either because they are in crisis and/or they are focused on their loved one's recovery. Their needs are often quite complex or hidden, so support needs to be offered proactively and highly effective identification and referral pathways need to be in place.

#### **C: Supporting information**

An overwhelming finding of a research study, soon to be published by the Alcohol and Families Alliance looking at the impact of drinking on intimate partner relationships, was that many people who are affected by their partner's alcohol use often do not know that they themselves are in need of, or eligible for support in their own right. In situations where they do seek support, this is often when a point of crisis has been reached.

Support services need to ensure that their doors are open and they are actively reaching these people before a crisis develops.

### **D: Key area for quality improvement**

Mental health support should be readily available as people go through life stage changes.

#### **D: Why is this a key area for quality improvement?**

Changes in life stages, such as retirement, parenthood, children leaving home or changing jobs can be a major trigger of alcohol-related harm and conflict amongst family members and within relationships. More awareness of this and relevant mental health support to support these life changes may help people that are using alcohol as a coping mechanism.

#### **D: Supporting information**

This was a key finding in a research report soon to be published by the Alcohol and Families Alliance looking at the impact of drinking on intimate partner relationships.