

Patrons: Tony Adams MBE • Olly Barkley • Calum Best • Lauren Booth • Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP • Geraldine James OBE  
Cherie Lunghi • Elle Macpherson • Suzanne Stafford CQSW • David Yelland

## Ways to Help

### Social Distancing and Children of Alcohol-Dependent Parents

These are unprecedented times, as the coronavirus spreads and our vital public services are forced to close, leaving families to fend for themselves.

1 in 5 children and young people in the UK are affected by their parent's drinking. Problem parental drinking can have a profound effect on young people's mental and physical health. Children of alcohol-dependent parents are approximately six times more likely to experience abuse and violence in the home.

As safety nets are sharply drawn away in the coming months, it is vital that children and young people know that they are not forgotten.

### Key concerns of Nacoa during COVID\_19 social distancing

- On occasions where the public sphere closes down (normally around public holidays), Nacoa regularly sees an **intensification of the severity** of calls to our helpline for children affected by their parent's drinking.
- As lockdowns take hold, people may be **bulk buying alcohol** and losing track of their drinking, partially as a way of coping with anxiety around current events.
- Children report a fear that they are **losing control** of events. They feel useless against the conflicts in the home, especially those brought on by problem drinking.
- **Isolation from public services** and normal routines leave them disconnected from safety nets outside of the home, especially around schools and social environments.
- There is a heightened sense of **taking on a care role** within the family, especially if Mum or Dad do not acknowledge there is problem.
- General awareness increases of an issue around alcohol within the family, matched by a knowledge that this is **not something anyone can talk about**.
- Some children may count on going to school for their lunch time meal, so may be **left with less food**, especially now that there's less to buy in the shops.
- They feel that there is **no respite** in sight.

Patrons: Tony Adams MBE • Olly Barkley • Calum Best • Lauren Booth • Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP • Geraldine James OBE  
Cherie Lunghi • Elle Macpherson • Suzanne Stafford CQSW • David Yelland

## Ways we can help others

- Check in. Be someone they can talk to. Simply listening does make a difference.
- If you think a child is suffering, be kind to them, don't ask questions or make comments about their parent's drinking if it doesn't seem necessary.
- Offer space to talk or be creative. This does not have to be face to face, and could be via a digital social platform.
- Be there for them. Be a person they can trust who will not judge them or their family.
- Print and display the Nacoa poster in public noticeboards and online forums to raise awareness of sources of help available.
- Share videos and posters (e.g. those provided in this resource pack) via social media. You never know whose life you are touching when sharing, and it can be an indirect way of making information available to someone who follows you.
- Increase awareness of the difficulties faced by children of alcohol-dependents in your place or work or social space. Share knowledge of services that will be available throughout the shutdowns.
- Read information leaflets supplied in this resource pack. They contain excellent further information and tips to help.
- Pass on '[Jasper's Wish](#)', Nacoa's discreet storybook for young people affected by their parent's drinking. It is available in hard copy on request and is included as a digital copy in this resource pack.

## Ways we can help ourselves

- Visit [Nacoa.org.uk](https://nacoa.org.uk) for information, advice and support.
- If you feel ready and supported, talk to someone you trust.
- Call the Nacoa helpline 0800 358 3456 or email [helpline@nacoa.org.uk](mailto:helpline@nacoa.org.uk).
- Connect with others in similar situations. For example through reading experiences on [COAisathing.com](https://COAisathing.com).
- Keep a journal or write a letter. You can email it to Nacoa, too.
- Find ways to help you stay calm: colouring books, immersive apps, games, drawing, or playing music.
- Write your own [personal experience](#) for the Nacoa website; you can do this anonymously.

Patrons: Tony Adams MBE • Olly Barkley • Calum Best • Lauren Booth • Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP • Geraldine James OBE  
Cherie Lunghi • Elle Macpherson • Suzanne Stafford CQSW • David Yelland

- Try to keep doing things you enjoy. It can help you forget about problems at home for a while.
- Read [Jasper's Wish](#) or other fiction that relates to how you are feeling. You can find reading lists for your age group at [Nacoo.org.uk](http://Nacoo.org.uk).
- Find safe online spaces where you can share how you feel. Follow Nacoo and join in on our Facebook Live sessions, which will be running throughout the closures (featuring extra special guests).
- Find a service for you that is open during the social distancing. The Alcohol Health Alliance keep an up-to-date list of all [available services](#) for the family, which we also include as a document in this resource pack.
- Find ways to exercise and maintain a healthy diet. These can help with your mood. There are lots of live tutorials beginning to emerge online.

'Throughout it all, I have to take this situation one day at time and make a decision each morning to put [myself] first. I remind myself I am not alone, I may be inside my house, but I have resources and technology to keep me connected.'

Melissa Rice (BBC 'Hooked' presenter)

['We're in this together'](#), Alcohol Harm Alliance.