

AlcoholAction
Ireland



Hearing the silent voices of children impacted by parental alcohol misuse

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“ Alcohol Action Ireland is a non-governmental agency who act as an expert independent voice for policy change on alcohol-related issues, advocating to reduce levels of alcohol harm in Ireland and improve public health, safety and wellbeing.

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Advocating to Reduce Alcohol Harm

Established 2003

Staff of 3

Mainly funded by Health Service Executive

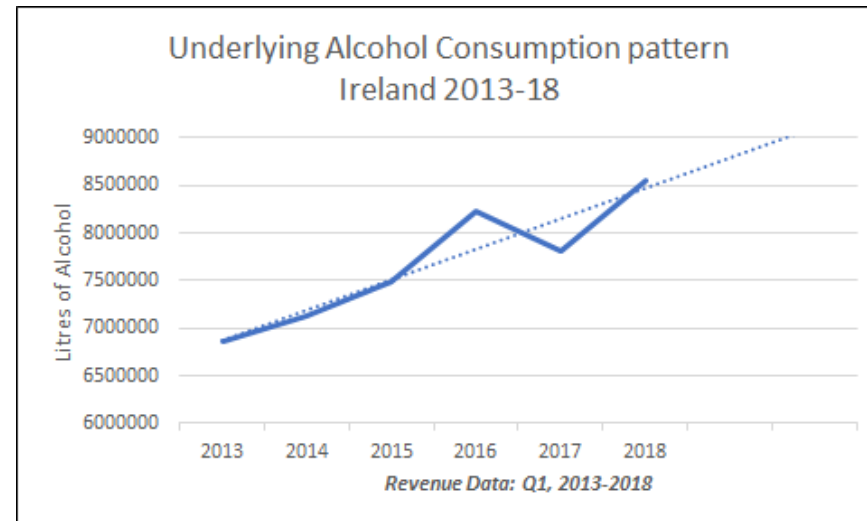
Ireland's relationship with alcohol

Whole of population

HARM FROM OUR DRINKING IN 2013



Consumption pattern



Alcohol in Ireland: consumption, harm, cost and policy response (2016)

Alcohol attributable to:

- ▶ 1000 deaths per year
- ▶ 1500 beds occupied every day
- ▶ Half of all suicides
- ▶ 900 cancers annually

Cost to economy and tax payer

€ **1.5 billion**

spent on alcohol related hospital discharges.
That's €1 for every €10 spent in public health in 2012*

*This excludes emergency care, general practice, psychiatric care and alcohol treatment services

In 2012:

160,221

hospital bed days used
for alcohol-related illness
(3.6% of total bed days)

2013 survey

€ **41 million:**

The estimated cost
of alcohol-related
absenteeism in 2013

2013 survey

An estimated
5,315

people lost their job as a
result of alcohol in 2013

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Silent Voices

- ▶ Aims to start a conversation about the hidden harm to children in families with parental alcohol misuse



Silent Voices aims

- ▶ Raise awareness about the long-term harm and distress including trauma caused to children and adult children affected by Parental Alcohol Misuse (PAM)
- ▶ Inform service providers about the long term consequences which can impede growth and development in children arising from living with PAM
- ▶ Advocate for enhancement of existing services so that no child affected by PAM is left unsupported - at present there are no dedicated services for adult children.

Who are the Silent Voices?

- ▶ Children currently growing up with parental alcohol misuse (PAM)
- ▶ Adult who grew up with PAM and who as an adult develops a problem with alcohol
- ▶ Adult who grew up with PAM who as an adult enters into a relationship with a problem drinker
- ▶ Adult who grew up with PAM but who does not develop a problem with alcohol or marry someone who does, and yet is still profoundly affected

Scale of the problem in Ireland

- ▶ 1.35 million people have harmful relationship with alcohol (HRB 2016)
- ▶ 1 in 6 or 7 children are experiencing Hidden Harm today (HSE, *The Untold Story*, 2018)
- ▶ 587,000 children, over half under 15 years old exposed to risk from parental drinking nationals. 2011 report *Hidden Realities: Children's Exposure to Risks from Parental Drinking in Ireland*
- ▶ 400,000 at least are adult children from alcohol impacted families

Trauma

- ▶ Children can experience high levels of trauma from PAM
- ▶ Fear and uncertainty
- ▶ Often have to take on a 'parenting role'

Keeping it in the family - AAI report 2009

When parents drank.....

- ▶ 14% of these children felt afraid or unsafe
- ▶ 14% often witnessed conflict between parents
- ▶ 11% said they often had to take responsibility for a sibling, because of parents' drinking.
- ▶ Impact of parental drinking did not differ according to socio-economic class

NACOA UK Survey

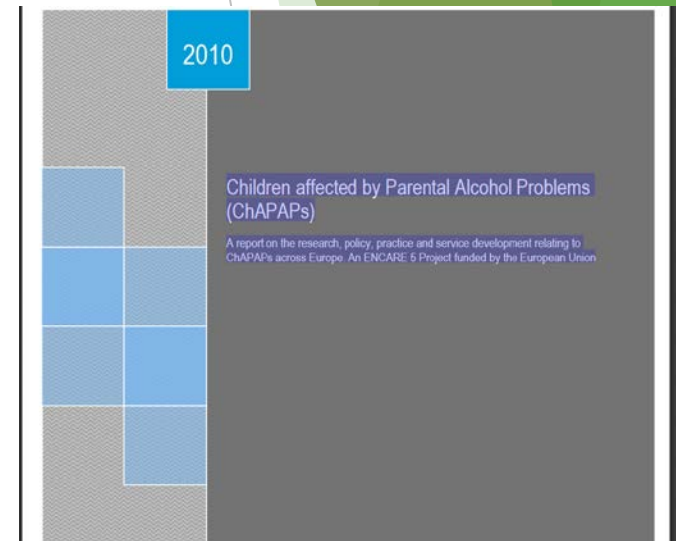
- ▶ Twice as likely to experience difficulties at school
- ▶ Three times more likely to consider suicide
- ▶ Five times more likely to develop eating disorders

http://www.nacoa.org.uk/media/files/Children%20of%20Alcoholics_%20the%20UK's%20Largest%20Survey.pdf

Children affected by Parental Alcohol Problems (ChAPAPs) A report on the research, policy, practice and service development relating to ChAPAPs across Europe

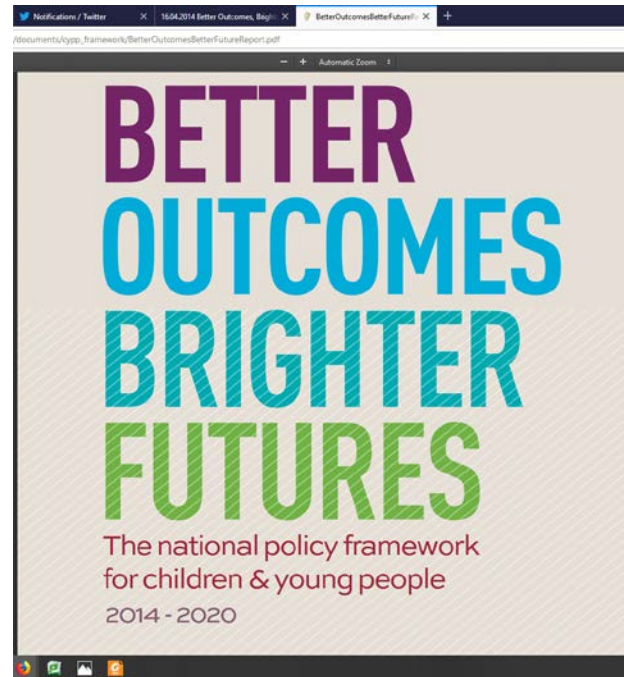
- ▶ Insecurity
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Loneliness

- ▶ Later life - anxiety, depression, aggressive behaviours and relationship difficulties, significant risk of alcohol problems



The National Audit of Neglect Cases

- ▶ Parental alcohol misuse was a factor in 62% of neglect cases



Long term legacy

- ▶ Low self esteem
- ▶ Learn never to question or expect anything from parents
- ▶ Suppression of memories - even positive memories
- ▶ Conditioned by years of helplessness and powerlessness
- ▶ Obligated to accept parental absence and disregard
- ▶ Due to other parent's depression, stress, short temper, super Mum/Dad - finding similar partner
- ▶ Lack the ability to feel close or intimate to another human being

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025

- ▶ Build awareness of the Hidden Harm of parental substance misuse with the aim of increasing responsiveness to affected children Action 1.3.9b



Silent Voices launched 17 Jan 2019



Shared Voices

- ▶ *'I would wake in the morning, afraid of going into rooms because he might be there.'* Jenny
- ▶ *'When I was younger I was unable to focus on school or homework.'* Jack
- ▶ *'But two things still haven't left us, they are fear and shame.'* Roisin
- ▶ *'I got myself involved in sports, soccer, hurling and football as another way to escape what I was dealing with at home' .* Harry
- ▶ *'People get uncomfortable when I talk about my background'* Jack
- ▶ *'I am 65 years of age and still carry the scars of my childhood surrounded by alcohol'* Siobhan

25 Jan 2019 HSE and Tusla launch 'Hidden Harm'

- ▶ Practice Guide and accompanying Strategic Statement
- ▶ Sets out how HSE and Tusla intend to bridge the gap between adult and children's services in favour of a more family-focused approach that considers the needs of dependent children and other family members

PAM and school

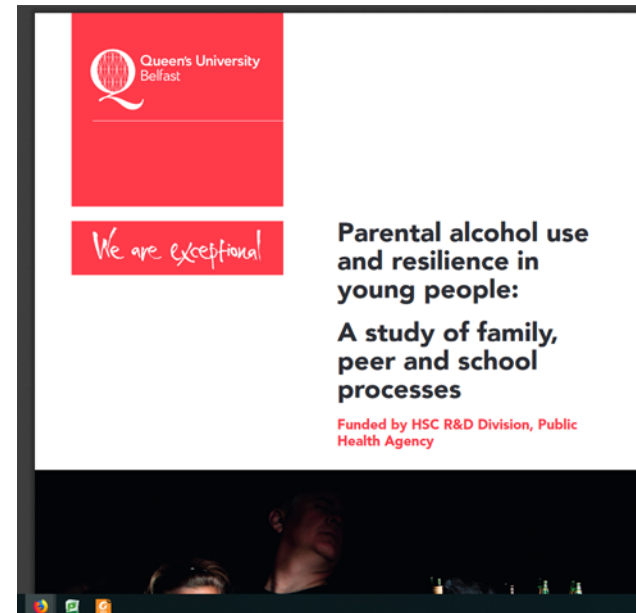
- ▶ PAM impedes learning and development
- ▶ Children may lack concentration, may exhibit behaviour issues
- ▶ Alternatively may be super achievers

PAM and school

- ▶ Teacher/guidance counsellor may be first trusted adult to whom a child can confide
- ▶ In alcohol education/well being classes - issue might arise
- ▶ How to respond?

Teacher education

- ▶ AAI Survey of ITE providers indicated there was no formal inclusion of training around PAM included in curriculum
- ▶ Limited professional development in this area
- ▶ NI study



Parental alcohol use and resilience in young people:

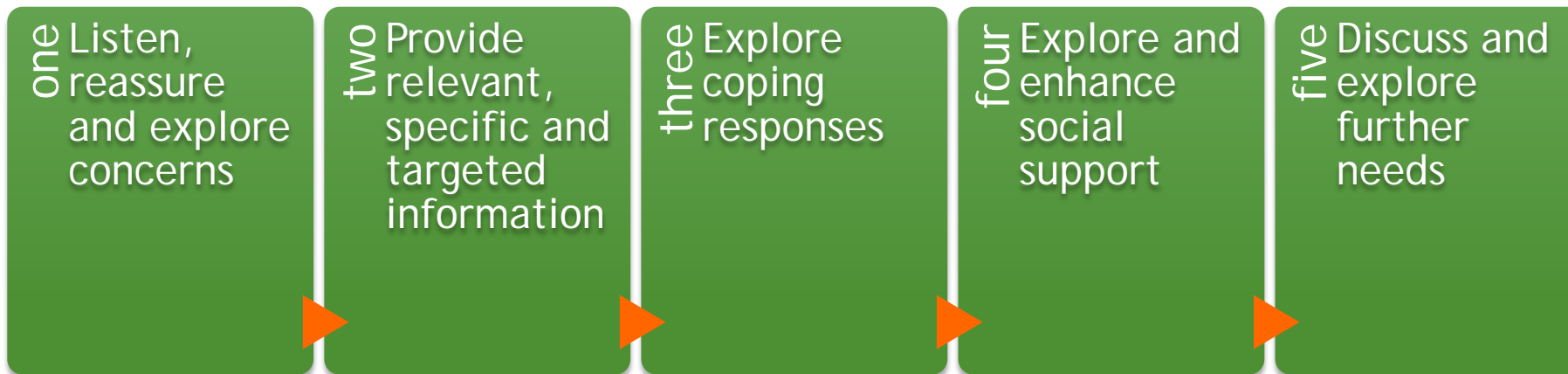
A study of family, peer and school processes

- ▶ Schools should have at least one professional trained and aware of the impact of parental drinking on children's outcomes.
- ▶ Teachers can play a valuable role in tracking and encouraging young people's engagement in afterschool activities and contact with positive role models
- ▶ Generic school based interventions to build resilience may be useful in targeting those exposed to lower levels of problem drinking.

Steps to cope

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Steps to Cope website. The browser's address bar displays <https://stepstocope.co.uk>. The website features a purple header with the logo and navigation links for Home, Information, Resources, and Our Blog. The main content area includes a large image of a person wearing a white t-shirt with the Steps to Cope logo, set against a background of colorful, abstract light trails. Text on the page reads: "A NEW HELP AND SUPPORT SERVICE", "DISCOVER STEPS TO COPE", and "A RANGE OF FREE SELF HELP TOOLS AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE". A prominent purple banner at the bottom of the main content area contains the text "Click to launch the FREE steps to cope toolkit" and "Or download our guide to help walk you through the steps" with a blue download icon and a "CLICK HERE" button. Below this banner, there are three smaller sections: one titled "ALCOHOL" with the subtitle "WHAT IS IT? WHY CARE?", another with the Steps to Cope logo, and a third with an illustration of three people and the text "This site is based on the 5-Step Method developed by AFINET-UK. The Five Step". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date as 07/26/2019 and the time as 16:09.

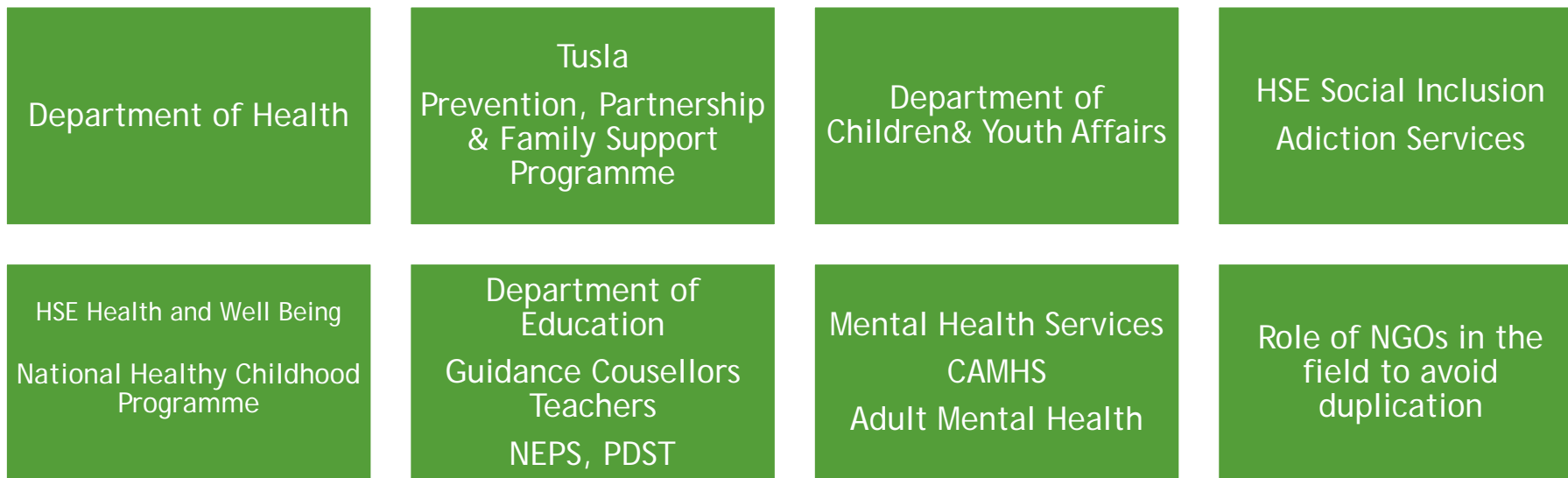
Steps to cope



Steps to Cope is a partnership between ASCERT, SEHSCT, AFINet and Barnardos NI

- ▶ 76% showed an overall increase in resilience

A national co-ordinated response required to meet the needs of children and adult children impacted by parental alcohol misuse.



Survey

Would very much appreciate your input to our short survey.

For more information please see:

<https://alcoholireland.ie/campaigns/silent-voices/>

Email silentvoices@alcoholactionireland.ie

Thanks