

CASA Family Service



INFORMATION FOR REFERRERS

Hidden Harm

Hidden Harm is a term used to describe the impact of parental substance misuse on children. In the past 6 years there have been two reports which have raised the profile of Hidden Harm in the UK:

- Hidden Harm Report (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 2003)
250,000 – 350,000 children of problem drug users in the UK.
- Bottling it up Report (Turning Point 2006)
Up to 1.3 million children affected by parental alcohol use.

1/3 of domestic violence incidents are linked to alcohol misuse.

It is now generally agreed that around 10% of children in the UK are affected by parental substance misuse. This figure indicates that in the London Borough of Islington up to 4,000 children may be living in household affected by parental substance misuse.

Referral Criteria

CASA Family Service is a free service to all residents of Islington that provides support to families where a parent or carer has experienced substance misuse and the family have a child or children 18 years old and younger.

We also work with families and mothers prior to birth / during pregnancy.

We work with families where the using parent is currently using, and families where the using parent is currently abstinent (including sustained periods of abstinence).

We work in a flexible way with families, including working with grandparents and others who have parental responsibility for children, families where the parents are separated, step families and foster families etc.

We do not work with young people unless their parent(s) or carer(s) are engaged with the service.

We only accept full referrals where the family agrees to the referral. However, you can contact the service to talk through a potential referral without giving identifying details. We can also offer help and advice on how to engage the family in our service.

If you are unsure if a family meet the criteria for our service, we will be happy to talk this through with you and to offer advice on other sources of help.

How to refer

We accept self referrals and referrals from professionals. In both cases we do all the paperwork. Just call **020 7561 7490** and we will take you through the referral process and make a record of any information we need. If you do not have time to answer our questions when you call (which can take about 20 minutes), we will arrange a time to call you back and take the referral information at a later date

After the initial call taking the details, we may get back to you to ask further questions if we feel this would help us clarify the family's situation and needs.

How We Work

CASA Family Service aims to move the focus away from substance misuse onto children and family life. We are not an abstinence based service and believe the family environment can be made safer and more secure even when the substance misuse does not change immediately.

The service offers emotional and practical support around parenting and family issues in a flexible semi-structured, child focused intervention and provides supported referrals to other services where appropriate.

We generally work with the adults in the family for the first few sessions to find out more about the family history and help them to think about how to introduce the children to the work. Once we begin working with the children (or in some cases, just those family members willing to participate in the work) we offer support in a variety of ways depending on the family's or individual's needs. Examples of the ways we work include; family sessions to promote strengthened relationships; individual sessions for children and young people to help them express and resolve negative feels and increase their resilience; individual, or couple, sessions for parents to support changes in alcohol or drug use and promote protective parenting.

Early in the work, using family values and family strengths "card sort" exercises, we help the family identify their strengths and values, and from this information help the family identify goals they want to work on. At this point we invite the family (and where appropriate the referrer and workers from partner agencies involved in the work) in for a review session. At this session we will develop a care plan with the family to structure the work; outside agencies may be included in this care plan and we will support the family to implement this plan at a pace that feels comfortable for them.

Our main office is in Finsbury Park but we also do outreach work in various satellites throughout the borough and will undertake home visits where needed. We also provide training, consultation and support in relation to Hidden Harm to other professionals working with families, children and young people.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We are committed to keeping information that parents and children share with us confidential within our service so that family members trust that we will respect their privacy. We have found this essential in establishing a therapeutic relationship with families.

However, we also explain to our clients how we will share information when to do so is in their, or their children's, best interest. We make it clear to families that we have a duty to inform appropriate agencies if we have concerns about any family member's safety, both adult safety and any child safeguarding matters.

Further to this, we value working closely within a professional network and would expect to seek the family's consent to keep referrers informed as to their attendance and significant issues relating to substance misuse and family life. We usually invite referrers to meet with the family and ourselves for regular reviews during their work with us as part of this collaborative process.

