

Opening the can of worms - safely

Be part of the solution

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Links

Huge overlap between alcohol and domestic violence:

- Perpetrators most often use alcohol before/during incident
- Victims/survivors use alcohol to numb the pain of the abuse after

Alcohol services are already seeing both perpetrators and victims:

- Between 60% and 90% of women clients in alcohol services are/have been subject to domestic violence
- Up to 80% of male clients are/have been perpetrators (*estimates from UK alcohol services*)
- Many are parents - There are an estimated 61,000 to 104,000 children in Ireland under the age of 15 living with problem drinking parents, domestic abuse is often an added issue

All services have a responsibility to protect others from harm; this includes their clients and their clients' victims.

Key issues

- High number of cases on the child protection register with alcohol, domestic abuse and mental health issues
- Social workers receive no or little training on parental problem drinking and DA
- No routine screening for DA in alcohol services - no risk assessments
- Little effective alcohol screening in refuge – lack of refuge space for victims who drink
- Inconsistent partnership working in the locality and nationally
- Children affected become invisible

Impact on children

- ◉ Child abuse, including sexual
- ◉ Mental health & wellbeing
- ◉ Early alcohol, drug and pregnancy
- ◉ Teenage intimate partner abuse
- ◉ Anti-social behaviour
- ◉ Sexual crimes including rape
- ◉ Distortion of gender understanding
- ◉ Paedophilia

What are the challenges

- ◉ Differing time scales
- ◉ Differing thresholds
- ◉ Differing goals
- ◉ Differing language
- ◉ Limited training
- ◉ Gap in knowledge of partners responsibilities, remits and limitations
- ◉ Lack of funding

What we did

Alcohol Concern launched the Embrace project to develop a model drawing on the expertise and innovative practice already operating in the field. This is a model which alcohol services can adopt to improve their way of working with domestic abuse, children and families and do so safely.

Alcohol services can become:

ACES.....

- ① **A**ware of domestic abuse in their work
- ② **C**ommitted to working with their partners in the domestic abuse field
- ③ **E**quipped with skills and tools including recording
- ④ **S**afe by prioritising the safety of victims/survivors, including children.

The Embrace Model

Stage one

- Engaging with the pilot site
- Assessing their current practice
- Familiarising them with the Embrace model.

Stage two

- Focusing on the practicalities through development of policy, protocols and pathways
- Exploring partnerships, developing links to build a multi-agency approach.

Stage three

- Equipping sites with tools and resources to develop active screening, risk assessments/management and care planning
- Integration of the Embrace model at their service

How we did it

- Systems change process
- Policy, protocols and procedures
- Training
- Action research
- Publications
- Attended meetings
- Advised central local government on cross government sector collaborative approach

Further challenges

- Attitudes and beliefs
- Service identity
- Funding
- Policy development
- Levers
- Perpetrators /victims
- Fear
- Visibility of issue

Good practice

Systems change

- Policies, procedures & protocols
- Building respectful collaborative partnership (SLA)
- Routine screening, risk assessment
- Commitment at all levels

Practice developments

- Addressing societal/personal/professional attitudes beliefs
- Protective parenting strengths approach, building resilience for children
- Time to reflect
- Service users

What next

- Government legislation
- Cross government strategic planning
- All government/party collaboration
- Prevention & early intervention
- Joint commissioning
- Funding
- Awareness raising
- Training
- Appropriate clinical supervision
- Improved service delivery nationally

The way forward

Services

- " Partnership Working
- " Risk Assessment
- " Supervision
- " Swap Training
- " Satellite Services
- " Safe Policies, SLA,
- " information sharing protocol
- " Lead for CP & DA
- " Information
- " **Screening**

Strategic

- ⊙ Joint Strategies Safeguarding Child protection, Alcohol, Domestic Abuse, Crime Prevention
- ⊙ Joint Commissioning
- ⊙ Responsible Funding
- ⊙ Monitoring/Evaluation

The Embrace ethos

Children affected by parental alcohol misuse and domestic abuse should become visible within adult alcohol services.

We should stop the practice of sending victims through the revolving doors of alcohol, domestic abuse and child protection services. The process often leaves them feeling that services are as disempowering as their own abusive relationships.

Embedding the Embrace model within practice means that instead of being part of the problem, workers in alcohol services can be part of the solution

So, how will you
be part of the
solution?