



25 May 2011

Dear colleague,

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) and The Children's Society have today (25 May) published the first booklet of its kind for use by children affected by a parent or carer who drinks alcohol excessively. This resource is designed to help them to have frank discussions with professionals working with them, or with another adult they trust, when they are worried about a parent or carer and the problems being caused in their lives and their families by a significant adult's alcohol consumption.

The booklet, *'You are not on your own – A booklet to help children and adults talk about a parent's drinking'*, is available as a free online resource. It is intended to facilitate adults' support for children, and to address ways to keep them safe from harm.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) calls on signatory Governments to do all that they can to ensure that children grow up in a safe and healthy environment. Helping to protect children from harm and neglect is a central role of the OCC and The Children's Society. This booklet aims to build on our work in this area. It was developed and designed in partnership with children and young people, following a recommendation from Alcohol Concern and The Children's Society last year calling on the Government to commission a resource for professionals to use with children affected by alcohol misuse in their family. (*Swept under the carpet: Children affected by parental alcohol misuse*, 2010).

The text is based on children's comments and children's views are highlighted in the booklet so that it is clear they are sharing their experiences with others in similar circumstances.

Practitioners have already told us that the booklet is a useful resource, and a timely publication given concerns amongst professionals about gaps in the information and resources available for children, parents and professionals working with families affected by an adult who is drinking too much alcohol.

Research in the report mentioned above reveals that around 2.6 million children in the UK are living with parents who are drinking hazardously and 705,000 are living with dependent drinkers. A survey of 1,000 adults, also mentioned in the report, shows that eight out of ten agreed that heavy drinking among parents is a serious problem for some children in the UK. 84% agreed that a parent who drinks heavily can be as harmful to a child as a parent who takes addictive or illicit drugs.

The Children's Society's Stars National Initiative worked with The Children's Participation Consultancy to gather the children and young people's views and design the booklet. We consider the resource to be a credit to their work. We would like to thank them and the children who took part in developing the materials.

We hope you will help us to disseminate information about the booklet to those who are working to support vulnerable children and young people in these circumstances. The booklet is available free of charge on both the [Children's Commissioner's website](#) and [The Children's Society's website](#).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Atkinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Dr Maggie Atkinson
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Reitemeier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, horizontal tail.

Bob Reitemeier
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