

## About Scottish Families

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs is a national charity which supports anyone affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use in Scotland. We give information and advice to many people and help them with confidence, communication, general wellbeing, and we link them into local support. We also help people recognise and understand the importance of looking after themselves.

When we say 'family', we mean who you see as your family. It could be your partner, your parent, your child or grandchild, your sibling, your friend, your colleagues, your neighbours, and anyone we may have missed. Our love and care for each other makes us family.

We provide both national and local support services. Each year we support family members from all Scotland's 32 council areas, and from all walks of life. We know there is no single 'type' of family affected by substance use.

## Elsie's Story

Elsie contacted Scottish Families' Helpline after feeling she had reached breaking point with her home situation. As Elsie lives in the Forth Valley area, Helpline staff referred her on to our local family support service based there. A holding text message was sent to Elsie on the day the local team received her referral, with a follow up message sent five days later, to arrange a suitable time to talk and explain the support available to her.

During that call, Elsie started to open up and talk about her worries. She shared that her middle son, now 26, started experimenting with drugs when he was a teenager. Elsie reported that he first drank with friends at 15 and began smoking cannabis at 16. Elsie's son found school challenging at times and was diagnosed with ADHD at 14.

Elsie was devastated to recently learn that her son had been using cocaine and she spoke of her fear about what this might be doing to him and her growing worries of where all his money was going. He had asked her for help with money on numerous occasions in the past year, which she had thought was to help with the upkeep and running of his car, but she now wondered if it had been spent on drugs.

Elsie said she felt guilty all the time, wondering what she'd done to cause her son to turn to drugs. She wanted to do anything to stop him using and this was causing arguments at home, as his three sisters felt he was getting all the attention, no matter how he behaved. They resented this and hated all the shouting that was going on. The girls had stopped inviting friends back to the house because of all the rows at home.

Elsie said she and her husband had a good relationship, but she was hiding things from him, and they were disagreeing on what to do with, and for, their son. They had stopped going out or having weekends away and Elsie felt they either spoke only about their son's drug use or sat in silence.

Elsie said she couldn't stop thinking about her son and what might happen to him. It was keeping her awake at night and she was exhausted from crying all the time. Work was becoming harder as she was finding it hard to concentrate and was either being bombarded by calls from her son, or wasn't hearing from him at all, which left her worrying about where he was and whether or not he was safe.

Forth Valley Family Support Service was able to offer Elsie regular one-to-one sessions, which she opted to have over the phone. These were always arranged at a time that suited Elsie and it was agreed to send her a text

message first, as neither her son nor her husband knew she was speaking with us. The text message was a way of making sure Elsie felt safe to speak.

Elsie didn't feel able to participate in any of our Family Support Groups, where affected family members come together to share their experiences, discuss coping strategies, and learn from one another. Elsie found the thought of this too stressful and increased her anxieties. Elsie was encouraged to look at ways of making time for herself, to help her reduce the stress she was feeling. Elsie decided to take part in Project Balance, a part of our service which offers reiki, massage, guided mediation, and yoga. Both this and her regular phone calls helped her work through her feelings, which led to her being better to regulate her emotions. Elsie also used her one-to-ones to look at problem solving and learn ways of having better communication at home with the family. As Elsie's engagement with Project Balance grew from individual treatments to taking part in group activities such as yoga and guided meditations, she started to consider coming along to one of our social groups and was supported to come to a film night. Elsie enjoyed this and has set herself a goal of working towards attending a Family Support Group. This work is moving at Elsie's pace, with no pressure on her to attend any more groups, until she feels ready to.

#### Impact Quote:

*"For me, Project Balance has been super helpful and Scottish Families in general have supported me throughout some really tough times in the last couple of years. ... Project Balance in particular has given me the space to allow myself to focus on myself for that hour that I have a treatment, or the 30 minutes that I'm having a massage, or with Angie's yoga, spending that time looking after me because a lot of the time, I look after everybody else and I don't often give myself enough time to look after me, because I'm running from work to home to going to see family. Having those scheduled yoga sessions or those scheduled holistic therapies really helps me and keeps me going.*

*When I'm having a tough day, I know that maybe in a few weeks' time I will get another holistic therapy and that really keeps me going, because I find it really difficult sometimes sort of in my own head and stuff like that, and Angie has been really helpful. I've actually cried at some of the yogas as well because Angie really focuses on how you are feeling and on your body, and releasing things that you are withholding. A couple of times when we've been doing the vinyasa at the end of class, I've cried or I've got a bit teary and the same when Angie did the reiki.*

*So, I really appreciate the service and I think it's really, really good for anyone who is being supported by Scottish Families to get that support in another form other than the group meetings. It's really helpful."*

If you are concerned about someone else's alcohol or drug use, please contact Scottish Families Helpline, Tel 08080 101011, email [helpline@sfad.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sfad.org.uk), webchat [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk).  
You can find out more about Scottish Families at [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk).

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