

## INTRODUCTION

# Addiction

I'm Lucy and I'm 22 years old.

I know what it's like to live with a parent who has addictions and the catastrophic consequences this can have on a child, reaching far into their adult life.

When I think back to where it all started to go wrong for our family, the time I would have most benefitted from help and intervention, I'm immediately taken back to my early childhood.

So I have decided to create this leaflet to ask any professional who works with children to never dismiss something a child says as 'normal' or 'silly'.



## HOW TO HELP

"Whether you work with children and young people or with adults who are parents/carers, or likely to become so, you need to be aware of child protection issues. You have a duty to put the welfare of the child first, over and above all other duties to your adult clients. This includes sharing information for the protection of the child."

**Source: For Highlands Children - Information for Professionals.**

"When a suspicion of abuse or neglect is identified within a school, the member of staff working with the child will immediately discuss this with the designated person. If the designated person is not available, contact should be made with another member of the senior management team. If no manager is immediately available, direct contact should be made with social work, and the Designated Person should be informed as soon as possible thereafter.

If the Designated Person is not also the child's Named Person, in all cases, the Designated Person must discuss the concerns with the Named Person. The requirement for immediate action should always be considered alongside the need to have a considered approach based on what is already known about the child.

If following discussion, concerns remain; the Designated Person should immediately contact the Team Manager at the local social work office or the local police. It is important when contacting social work services or police that it is made clear that the call is regarding a child protection concern. In most circumstances, it is prudent to have a discussion with police or social work, before any discussion takes place between the school and the child's family. Further to these discussions with police or social work, if it is concluded that a child protection enquiry should be initiated, the designated person or Named Person must complete the standard Concern Form and send to the Team Manager and the Area ECS Office within 24 hours. The school should also keep a copy and file it in the pupil's progress record."

**Source: For Highlands Children - Inter-agency Guidelines to Protect Children and Young People in Highland.**

For more information please visit:  
<http://forhighlandschildren.org/>



# HELPING CHILDREN OF ADDICTED PARENTS

## THE BIGGEST SIDE EFFECT OF ALL...



a lost Childhood

Written by a young person  
from the Scottish Highlands  
with first hand experience.



## MY STORY

I was born in 1991. I had a Mum, a Dad and a cat called Poppy. Life was good. This is when I had a Dad. He was cool; he'd tell me funny stories.



My Dad liked to have a good time; he'd go away drinking for days and leave us with no food. We'd have to walk to my Granny's to get fed. He'd blow all our money on horses and then be in a stinking mood for days. My mum would cry.

To the outside world everything looked normal, my mum hid everything so well. My Dad was a 'nice guy' to everyone, we had a beautiful home with a swing set in the garden, I could just be a 'badly behaved' girl at school sometimes – little did they know.

Then things got worse. When I was 6 Dad lost someone that he was really close to. This changed him. This is when his addictions worsened. He became angry, he smelt of alcohol, he was paranoid and he frequently hit my mum. I saw him hit her, kick her and spit in her face. I often hid my sister under my bed and ran to our neighbours to get help.

I saw things that no child should ever see. I have memories of him 'not being right' and found myself in really confusing situations that I knew were wrong but... he was still my Dad. Being taken to houses, that I now know were drug dens, being left outside for hours wondering when my Dad would come back out and take me home. Or being taken inside and seeing people who were also 'not right' and feeling scared and confused. Sometimes this was late at night (when my Mum was at work and didn't know) so I was tired and hungry. I'm still scared of bumping into these people, I hate being reminded of those days. I still get bouts of anxiety where I fear Dad may turn up while using and hurt us. I don't go out as much as a normal 22 year old would, I worry about things that a normal 22 year old wouldn't, I have nightmares and panic attacks that I have tried for years to conquer. This is all because of what I saw as a child of an addicted parent. Please help make sure no more lives are destroyed by these issues.

Thank you so much for reading.

## SIGNS TO SPOT

Here are a some sentences that I said as a child which were discounted as 'normal'... but they had a deeper meaning.

### “Why does Dad go away for days and days?”

Dad would disappear for days at a time. He would say, 'Just going out for a paper' and not come back for days. We had no idea where he was, when and if he'd come back or if he was ok. I was so scared and worried.

Maybe my teachers and other adults thought when I said this that Dad was just away for work, on holiday, visiting friends or that I was confused.

### “Why is my Dad so sleepy?”

Dad would fall asleep a lot when he was using. I saw him fall asleep in the middle of sentences or eating his dinner. Sometimes this happened even in public places.

Did my teachers just think that maybe he was just an ordinary tired Dad after a hard day's work?



### “Why is Dad shouting at Granny?”

Granny would get so frustrated with my Dad and the ways in which he was treating us as he changed. This would cause confrontations and my Dad would shout and shout at Granny as she tried to reason with him.

Perhaps my teachers thought this was a private family matter and nothing to 'stick their noses into'. I wish they had asked more questions.

## ! DON'T IMMEDIATELY DISCOUNT SOMETHING AS 'NORMAL' BEHAVIOUR

### “Why is Dad so happy then so sad?”

As Dad's using and addictions got worse his moods would fly from one extreme to another. Days when he'd lost money through gambling were terrifying; you knew to keep out of his way. Days when he'd won money were so confusing as he'd buy us amazing gifts, treat Mum to something nice and be in a great mood – it just wouldn't last long. His mental health started to deteriorate so rapidly, he'd be depressed most of the time.

Maybe people thought he just had a lot on his mind, perhaps he was just temporarily stressed?



### “Why does Dad smell funny?”

Dad was drinking heavily between using. He'd climb into bed with me to read my bedtime story and fall asleep before the end of the first page. I still hate the smell of alcohol on someone's breath. When he came back from disappearing for days at a time he always smelled 'strange'.

Maybe they thought he just smelled of whatever he worked with or that he'd been doing something work related.

