

Strengthening the family relationships of people in recovery from addiction

Welcome to Pulse, the series of briefings from The Forward Trust for staff, partners, commissioners and stakeholders to communicate:

- **Insight** from our research team's analysis of client data and other findings
- Examples of **innovation** and continuous service improvement
- Evidence of our personal, social and economic **impact**

These briefings also aim to contribute to wider policy and practice conversations. The Forward Trust, now merged with Action on Addiction, provides a range of care, support and employment services to people struggling with drug or alcohol dependence or who have a history of offending. The people we support are amongst the most marginalised in society. We believe in everyone's ability to transform their lives, to achieve recovery and break the cycles of addiction and crime.

Executive Summary

The merger of Forward Trust and Action on Addiction in May 2021 unites two organisations with a shared mission and over 30 years' experience of supporting thousands of people to achieve recovery from addiction through a range of services – with particular experience of reaching and supporting socially-marginalised people, such as prisoners and ex-offenders.

Our merged organisation understands the impact of addiction on family relationships and the importance of the role of the family in recovery, and in recent years has developed and delivered a range of successful programmes, including:

- **Family Ties**, supporting adult clients in recovery to re-build and improve their relationships with family members and loved ones. To date, over 900 of Forward's prison-based substance misuse clients across the country have completed the group programme.
- **Recovering Families**, supporting the families of people with substance misuse problems to understand and manage the dynamics of addiction and its impact on their relationships with loved ones with over 277 participants to date.
- **Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT)**, a child-centred programme which brings together 'whole families' affected by addiction. Over 700 families to date have participated in M-PACT. Independent evaluation has shown that participation in the programme improves family coping, understanding of addiction, global family functioning and family cohesion.

The further development of family services is a key priority for the Forward Trust particularly as lockdown has led to a rise in addictive behaviour with a devastating knock-on impact on family life and child welfare. With the target of supporting 4775 individual and families and 1550 children and young people over the next three years, Forward is aiming to:

- Embed a family focused approach across all our services. Through training, support and dedicated interventions, staff understand the role of the family in addiction and value and consider the importance of the whole family in treatment and recovery. Every contact with an individual client enhances the potential for improved relationships and considers the needs of family members, including children and young people.
- Develop a wider range of programmes to support the family relationships of clients in recovery as well as the family members themselves.
- Expand the delivery of M-PACT through training staff and partners to reach more families and children in areas of need.

Context - The need for family support

A significant body of research points to the negative impact of addiction on family life, relationships and child welfare, including transgenerational cycles of trauma, deprivation, disadvantage, criminality and imprisonment. This research has led to a number of policy recommendations and initiatives in the field of drug and alcohol recovery and offender management:

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The substance misuse of a parent is recognised as an 'Adverse Childhood Experience' (ACEs) for their children. ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. Evidence shows that children with four or more ACEs are more likely to experience negative outcomes in adulthood¹:

- 11 times more likely to have been incarcerated
- 11 times more likely to have used heroin or crack cocaine
- 2 times more likely to binge drink
- 7 times more likely to be involved in recent violence

Hidden Harm report, 2003

Conducted by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Hidden Harm report called for more to be done to meet the needs of the children of drug users. The report's findings included:

- 2–3% of children in England and Wales and probably more in Scotland had parents who were problem drug users.
- Effective treatment of the parents' drug problems is one of the most likely ways to build their parenting capacity and that expanding treatment services across the country would benefit children as well as adults.
- Treatment of the parent is not enough and substance misuse services must 'see the child behind the client' and recognise their responsibility for ensuring the child's well-being.
- Read the report [here](#).

Lord Farmer Review, 2017

The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime was a review by Lord Farmer into the system of managing relationships with family in prison. It called for reform in the prison system and agencies surrounding it. This built on the work of a 1996 study that notably found that 63% of prisoners' sons went on to offend themselves. The review concluded that:

- Consistently good family work, which brings men face-to-face with their enduring responsibilities to family left in the community, is essential to rehabilitation.
- Family work is a 'Golden thread running through the prison system and the agencies that surround it' and that relationships are 'fundamentally important if people are to change'.
- Read the report [here](#).

A Crying Shame, Children Commissioner report on the Toxic Trio, 2018

The report, published by the Children's Commissioner for England, highlighted the impact of the 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse within the household, parental substance misuse and parental mental health issues on outcomes for children and young people. Children living in households where any of these 'toxic trio' factors exist are at notably greater risk of immediate harm and of experiencing a detrimental impact on their later life outcomes. Read the report [here](#).

¹ Bellis MA, Hughes K, Leckenby N, Perkins C & Lowey H. (2014) 'National household survey of adverse childhood experiences and their relationship with resilience to health-harming behaviours in England' BMC Medicine, 12:72 doi:10.1186/1741-7015-12-72

Family, Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC)

First piloted in 2008, FDAC is an initiative that supports parents to help them overcome substance issues and to give children the best possible chance of being raised by their own parents.

- FDAC recognises that very few parents intend to abuse or neglect their children, but that parents fail when they have significant problems including substance and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems and severe poverty.
- Independent evaluations of FDAC by Brunel and Lancaster Universities found it was more successful than ordinary proceedings in supporting parents to achieve abstinence from drugs and alcohol and allowed more children to be reunified or remain in the care of their parents. Read the report [here](#).
- A further review of the programme is due to report November 2022.

Independent review of drugs: prevention, treatment and recovery, Dame Carol Black, 2021

Dame Carol Black's recent review called for a whole family approach to addiction treatment and highlighted continued challenges presented by a lack of treatment focussed on children and young people. It calls for:

- Better support was for families with parental drug misuse need specific support which must be co-ordinated at a local level.
- Improvement in the level of skill and training among drug and recovery workers to better support people experiencing addiction to succeed with an improved understanding of trauma and the experience of different populations.
- Read the review [here](#).

Lords Public Services Committee

Following the February 2021 House of Lords Public Services Committee inquiry into 'The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability', Katherine Jenkins, Head of Families and Young People at Forward Trust has led Forward's contribution to the investigations that have led to the Committee's recommendations addressing child vulnerability.

The Forward Trust welcomes the Lords Public Services Committee's focus on early intervention and its recent proposals for the expansion of family hubs across the UK. In supporting the inquiry, Forward facilitated the involvement of two young people who attended M-PACT to share their experiences:

"If I did not do M-PACT, I would not be how I am right now, to be honest. I would have bottled up all those emotions. I just would not be what I am today. M-PACT really made me happy. M-PACT also really helped me with knowing that I was not alone, because there were loads of other kids there who were going through the same thing as me."

Leah

"M-PACT really helped me, because my mum, my gran and I had loads of bonding time. Maybe I would say 'go to M-PACT'. You get along and you have more time together"

Elsa

Leah and Elsa shared their experiences of living with parental addiction directly to members of the select committee, who commented that their testimonies "gave them a completely different understanding of what life is like for children in these situations, how they can easily be missed by statutory services, and how important the voluntary sector is in supporting families to recover".

Find out more about Forward's response the committee [here](#).

Impact of lockdown

Research conducted by Forward shows that lockdown has had a major impact on substance misuse and addictive behaviour in general, and on the wellbeing of our clients, those in prison in particular.

Rise in relapse and addiction

A [recent poll](#) published by Forward and undertaken by YouGov shows that as many as 20% of UK adults may be drinking more after three lockdowns.

- 17% of respondents who said they were drinking more indicated that they were experiencing problems as a result of their increased drinking, relating to work, sleep, money, relationships or physical withdrawal symptoms – with over a third of those experiencing problems saying they would find it difficult to resolve. This is a jump of nearly 30% from the previous year.
- 37% of people who identified as being in recovery from addictive behaviour pre-pandemic, reported a relapse or reoccurrence of their addictive behaviour during a year of lockdowns and restrictions. This is a sustained high from 2020, indicating the profound impact of the pandemic on the recovery community.

Poor mental health of prisoners through less access to family members

A survey in summer 2020 of prisoners in Forward's care revealed that 57% thought their mental health has deteriorated since the pandemic started, mainly as a result of being locked up 24/7 without access to meaningful activities or family visits.

Further, a February 2021 report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons found that prison restrictions had led to a decline in prisoners' emotional, psychological and physical well-being. There has been an uptake in the prevalence of prisoners displaying unhealthy coping strategies, including self-harm and drugs to cope with their confinement and associated anxieties. This has further negatively impacted on relationships with friends and families and created a need for renewed therapeutic family work in prisons and our communities. You can read the HM Inspectorate of Prisons report [here](#).



Our approach

Forward's services

In 2022-23 Forward will support 30,000 people to break the cycles of addiction and crime, to bring about and sustain positive change in their lives. Our services – delivered in prisons and communities across the UK - encompass drug and alcohol recovery, mental health, housing and employment support. You will find below an overview of Forward services.

Drug and alcohol recovery

- Services in 21 prisons in London, East, South East, and West Midlands.
- Community services in Essex, Liverpool, Hull and East Kent.
- Residential recovery at The Bridges (Hull) and Clouds House (Wiltshire).
- Recovery communities in those and other areas, brought together through Forward Connect.

Other services

- Primary mental health services in five prisons in the East of England.
- Offender management:
 - Personal wellbeing services for probation clients in East, South East and Cheshire.
 - Accommodation services for probation clients in Wales.
- Employment:
 - Information, Advice and Guidance (employment) provider in 18 prisons.
 - Community employability support in Kent and London.
- Housing projects in London and South East currently supporting over 150 ex-offenders and vulnerable people annually to access and sustain independent accommodation.

Our recent merger with Action on Addiction significantly strengthens our recovery services, bringing together 12-step programmes in both prison and community settings, residential recovery (e.g. Clouds House and The Bridges), traineeships for people in recovery, and recovery communities (of peer-based mutual support) across the country. Family support has also been a key service area for both organisations that will become stronger together.

Our family support




As an integral part of our addiction treatment and recovery model we will:

- 1. Understand the role of the family in an individual's addiction.**
- 2. Have an in-depth knowledge of the impact of an individual's addiction can have on the family and wider relationships.**
- 3. Recognise the importance of family and other relationships in all our interventions.**
- 4. Support the health, wellbeing and recovery of individual family members as well as the family as a unit.**

We routinely assess the status of clients' relationships, and their aspirations for those relationships, from first of point contact. Where funding for posts allows, we then refer clients to dedicated family workers to help them connect or re-connect with their loved ones, e.g. facilitating telephone conferences and family meetings. During lockdown we supported prison clients to maintain contact with their loved ones through 'Parent and Child Contact Packs' that included blank cards, crayons, jokes, pictures for colouring, and a letter of support with guidance on letter writing and keeping in touch with family – particularly children – during this difficult time.

In addition, and building on this 1-2-1 casework with clients, together we have developed a range of structured group programmes to support both clients and their families.

FORWARD'S GROUP PROGRAMMES (FAMILY)

PROGRAMME	AUDIENCE	AIMS
Family Ties	<p>Adult clients in recovery separated from their families (mainly through imprisonment)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds relationships between clients in custody and family members • Helps clients understand impact of crime and addiction on family life • Improves communication and honesty within the family
Recovering Families	<p>Family members affected by addiction</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports affected others to deal with the impact of their loved one's addiction on their lives • Fosters peer-to-peer mutual support, sharing insights and experiences
M-PACT	<p>Whole families (clients in recovery; parents together with their children)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase coping skills within the family • Improve family functioning • Identify resources to provide ongoing practical help • Build resilience and increase protective factors

Family Ties

Target audience:

Individual clients in recovery who have lost direct contact with their family members (mainly through imprisonment) but who have aspirations to reconnect with their loved ones and improve their relationships.

Programme aims and content:

Family Ties is a structured psychosocial programme that comprises eight workshops, focusing on a range of topics designed to help clients explore their family role and work towards rebuilding trust and discovering better ways to communicate with the people close to them.

Where delivered:

Prior to lockdown, Family Ties was being delivered in 13 prisons.

How delivered:

In prison the programme has been delivered through 'in person' workshops; it has the potential to be adapted for online delivery where local conditions allow. The Family Ties programme has also been adapted for community based settings.

Reach and Impact:

Over 900 clients have completed Family Ties since 2018. 85% of people who completed the programme saw improvement in understanding of how behaviour effects their family and confidence to make changes to their relationships.

“A big thank you for helping me to see it’s not just about me when I was in addiction, but my family and friends too. You helped me believe in myself again and my ability to rebuild relationships with my family.”

Former Family Ties workshop participant

Recovering Families

Target audience:

Family members and concerned significant others of people with substance misuse problems.

Programme aims and content:

Recovering Families is a nine session programme, designed to support those affected by the substance misuse of their loved one. Participants explore ways to cope with some of the challenges that can arise as a result of someone else's substance misuse, learning from others with similar experiences.

Where delivered:

East Kent community service in Dover, Sittingbourne, Ashford, Herne Bay, Dover and Hull ReNew.

How delivered:

The programme is delivered through nine 'in person' workshops. During lockdown the programme was delivered online through 'Zoom' sessions with participants from different parts of the country sharing their experiences.

Reach and Impact:

Over 227 clients have completed Recovering Families.

“It was a revelation that I found people like myself who were struggling with sons, brothers, husband and wives in addiction.”

“I just needed it to say what I needed to say to people who are all in the same boat as me...”

Recovering Families participants

Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT)

Target audience:

Whole families affected by addiction with a particular focus on giving a voice to children and young people within the family.

Programme aims and content:

M-PACT is a structured, psychosocial, educational, whole family intervention. The original programme model can support up to eight families at a time and consists of ten sessions, including eight core sessions, a review session and a reunion

Where delivered:

M-PACT has been delivered in schools, prisons (HMP Parc) and a range of community settings.

How delivered:

The 10-session programme can be delivered face-to-face. We are currently working on developing a blended version of the programme where eligible families could complete 50% of the programme online and 50% face to face.

M-PACT is a licenced programme and external organisations can be trained to deliver the programme. Practitioner training is accredited by the University of Bath and is delivered in either a 4 day face to face format or a blended learning format (2 days online and 2 days face to face). Licence holders receive ongoing guidance through our families and young people team and have access to an online hub that supports the effective delivery of programmes.

You can find out more about the M-PACT programme including impact, delivery and costs in our new M-PACT information leaflet. You can download this [here](#).

Reach and Impact:

- Over 500 practitioners trained to deliver M-PACT.
- Over 700 families have taken part in M-PACT with 80% completing the programme.

M-PACT Impact Evaluation

First developed by Action on Addiction in 2003 (in response to the Hidden Harm report) M-PACT is one of the longest standing interventions focused on parental substance misuse in the UK, and its whole family, multi-family, strengths based approach, with children at its heart, continues to be unique and innovative.

A twelve year evaluation of M-PACT found that:

- Families engage well with the programme, which can facilitate individual and family change in a range of areas including coping, understanding addiction, family functioning and family cohesion.
- It targets some of the individual and familial protective factors which are known to build resilience in families and especially vulnerable children and young people affected by difficulties such as parental substance misuse.
- It built greater understanding about how addiction can affect all members of a family. There were also improvements in how families reported the severity of addiction.
- Children often came to realise that their parents' addiction was not their fault; parents often accepted more responsibility for their problems.
- It produced significantly positive changes for many families, even those with multiple and complex needs.

“Where the whole family has been involved in group interventions, such as the M-PACT programme, the findings are [...] positive.”

Department for Work and Pensions



Further development

Building on our work to date, and responding to the increasing need following lockdown to tackle addiction and its adverse impact on children and families, Forward's new strategy to expand and enhance our Family Services centres on:

- 1. Adopting a family focused approach across all our drug and alcohol recovery services.** All front-line staff will be trained to understand the role of the family members and other relationships in addiction and recovery. When working with clients, staff will consider the importance of and the needs of the family members and the family unit as a whole in every intervention. Dedicated family roles will deliver family specific intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of loved ones, including children and young people. This approach will build awareness and increase referrals for our structured group support programmes.
- 2. Enhancing and developing a wider range of structured programmes.** This will include:
 - Further developing versions of Family Ties that are relevant for a wide range of community as well as prison settings.
 - Developing programmes for people who do not have appropriate family or support networks to reconnect with and build new supportive relationships.
 - Developing parenting programmes both for clients who are their child's main care giver and for those who do not have children in their care.
- 3. Extending the delivery of M-PACT and its unique child-centred approach:**
 - Building capacity to deliver the programme in areas of high need and where we have existing services (e.g. Kent, Essex, Liverpool, Surrey).
 - Increasing referrals to the programme both from our own services and from local partners and agencies, in particular 'child-led' referrals from local statutory and support services.
 - Building on the success of the programme for prison clients at HMP Parc, we also plan to extend delivery in the coming years.
 - Addressing new and emerging forms of addiction (e.g. gambling) and its impact on children and families.
 - We aim to support over 575 families and 870 children over the next three years through M-PACT.
- 4. Digital innovation.** Enhancing and extending the reach of our family programmes through digital delivery, maximising the potential of peer-to-peer support through our Fuse social learning platform.

Recovery Fund

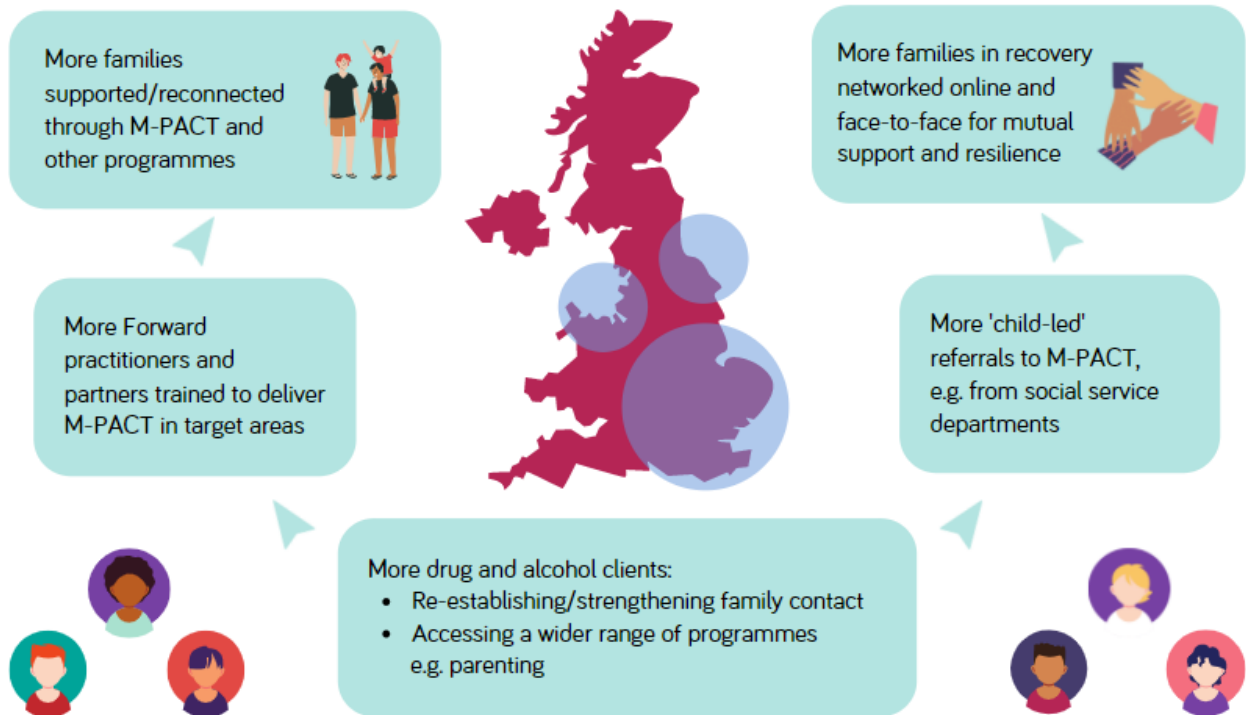
To support the development of our family work and other vital strands of recovery work for which there is limited public money, we have established the Recovery Fund, aiming to raise over £9m of charitable donations and grants over the next 3 years. Existing supporters of the Fund include Julia and Hans Rausing Trust:

“Over a number of years, we have seen the excellent work that has been done by the Forward Trust in helping people move beyond addiction, and provide a foundation from which they are able to rebuild their lives.

This work is now more important than ever after the pandemic, and we hope that the Forward Trust's Recovery Fund will provide people with addiction problems and their families the help and support they need to move forward with their lives in a positive direction.”

Julia and Hans Rausing

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



Work with us

To develop our family support programme, we want to work with other organisations and partners to realise and embed this approach. There is a wealth of expertise across the sector and we want to work collaboratively to continuously improve services and outcomes for the people we support. If you are working on something that could support this or would like to discuss this work further then please do get in touch. It is time to implement family focused support not just the recovery of individuals, but the families and communities supporting them.

To find out more about our programmes and research, contact Carwyn Gravell, Executive Director of Research and Development on carwyn.gravell@forwardtrust.org.uk