



# Bereavement Following Substance Use



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We will work with anyone who has died and alcohol or drugs have featured in their lives.

Including:

- Suicide
- Murder
- Accidents
- Long term health impact of drug/alcohol use
- Toxicology unconfirmed

# Common complexities with DRD

- Premature and preventable death
- Circumstances of the death
- Feelings of guilt
- Difficult relationship
- Trauma of potentially chaotic lifestyle
- Loss of hope
- Involvement with justice system
- Stigma

Almost always results in complicated grief.

**Double bereavement:** feeling like you have lost someone to their substance use first- and then their death.

**Anticipated grief:** anticipation of their death due to their substance using behaviour.

**Disenfranchised grief:** the feeling of being 'deprived' of the right to grieve.

# Problems regularly highlighted by families

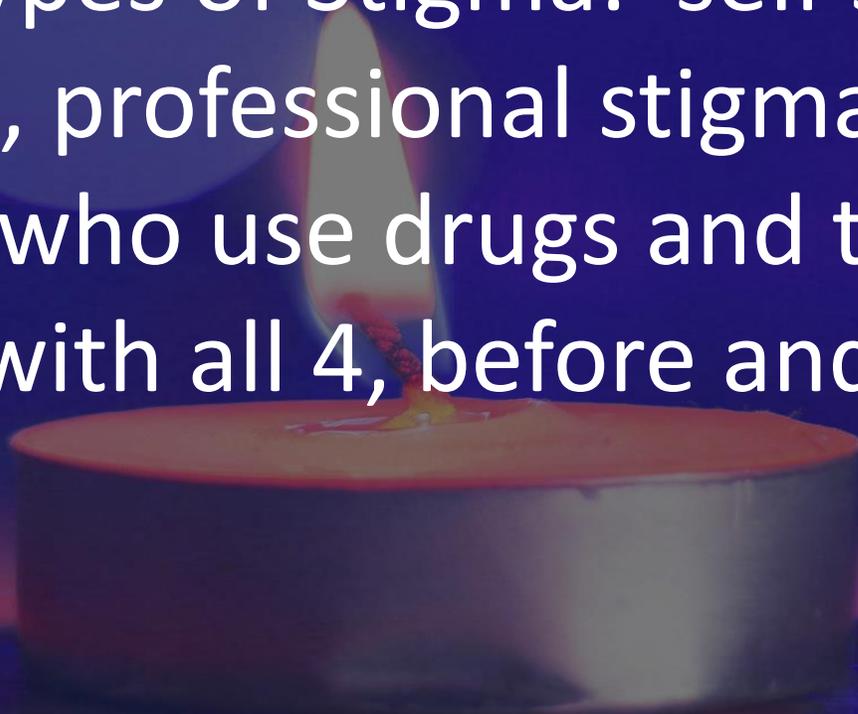
Language used by health professionals in person and in reports 'captures none of the humanity' of the person who died.

Long waiting times for coroners report leaves families with a lack of closure.

Lack of links between the justice and health systems.  
Families are left unsupported and grieving.

# Stigma

- Stigma is a 'stain or attribute' marking out someone as unacceptable.
- Four types of Stigma: self stigma, public/social stigma, professional stigma, and institutional stigma.
- Those who use drugs and their families are often faced with all 4, before and after death.



# The many problems with stigma in the context of bereavement

- Defines people by their behaviour.
- Places 'blame' on the person who died for their substance using behaviour.
- Shame can prevent people accessing support for their bereavement, increasing feelings of isolation.
- Families carry a guilt, shame and anxiety because of peoples perceptions of their loved ones behaviours.

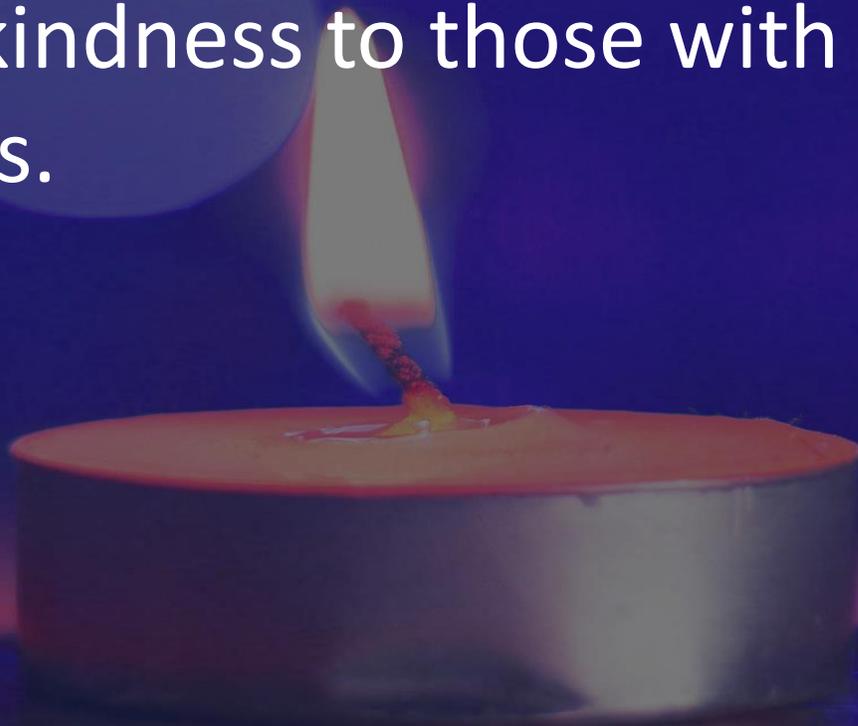
# Bereaved through substance use

## Key Messages

- Show kindness and compassion.
- Language is important.
- Every bereaved person is an individual.
- Listen and make time for the bereaved person.
- Working together.

# Small changes we can all make

- Challenge stigmatising language when you hear it.
- Show kindness to those with addictions and their families.





**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**HELPLINE**

- Free, confidential helpline offering listening support and signposting.
- Contact options available: Phone, Webchat and email.
- Online professional referral route via website



**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**TELEHEALTH**

- 6 sessions of one-to-one Virtual support via phone, webchat or skype.
- Listening support and practical advice (CRAFT) on how to respond to a loved ones substance use



**Scottish Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

**BEREAVEMENT**

- National bereavement service offering bereavement support.
- 6 sessions of bereavement counselling with a local, qualified counsellor



## Helpline

08080 10 10 11

helpline@sfad.org.uk

## Website

www.sfad.org.uk



@ScotFamADrugs



/ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs



@ScotFamADrugs