

# The Cost of Loving

## Our Strategy 2023-2026



**Scottish  
Families**  
Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

# The Cost of Loving

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Welcome to 'The Cost of Loving', Scottish Families' strategy for 2023-26.

When we launched our Change Will Come strategy (2020-23) in June 2020, we were just a few months into the global COVID-19 pandemic. At that early stage, we did not anticipate how much this would impact on our work, and the families we support – effects which continue today.<sup>1</sup>

We have developed this new strategy for 2023-26 in the grip of a Cost of Living crisis, which is quite rightly the focus of significant political, practical and media attention.

Cost of living pressures are increasing harm to many families affected by alcohol and drugs. This includes both direct harms (having less money and costs increasing) and also indirect harms (additional pressures increasing alcohol and drug use and levels of family stress – as with the [COVID pandemic](#)).

We are doing everything we can to reduce cost of living pressures for families, and to reach families where alcohol and drug harm has increased as a result.

However we are very aware that for families affected by a loved one's alcohol or drug use, the cost of living is just one of the many, many challenges they face on a daily basis. It is only one of the multiple plates they have to keep spinning.

Our families face an everyday and ongoing crisis, which will outlive the timescale of the current financial situation. This is the Cost of Loving, a relentless and exhausting tally of financial, practical, relationship and emotional costs.

Our family member, Amanda Barr, created the striking artwork on the cover of this document, powerfully illustrating this experience. We would like to thank Amanda for translating our words into such a memorable and powerful image.

The cost of loving includes monetary and non-monetary costs, as these family members describe:

**“Over the years I have paid his rent, food, clothing and his daughter's clothes. Husband and I re-mortgaged house 3 times to pay**

**debts caused by son's addiction. Taken more equity out of the house to pay drug debts. Drive son all over town to appointments, to 'score', to chemist and for his shopping. Always feels my time is his to use. He always wants money, food, vapes and the use of my car (I always put the petrol in). Buy his Xmas presents, birthday presents to give to his children or his wife (now ex). I have spent thousands and thousands over the years.”**

**“Cigarettes £77 weekly. Beer £35 weekly. Heating £194 monthly. Food £400 monthly. Loss of time for me – no time left for anything social or seeing friends. Loss of sense of self. Everything revolves round his needs. Must buy everything high fat high protein as he is unwell and very thin. This means I am eating high fat foods, and this had caused high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Heating needs to be kept on all day as he is always cold.”**

**“[My] Daughter uses crack cocaine. Her children live with me but I pay for her to maintain her relationship with her children. Costs £300 a month. Pay her heating £150 month. Clothes £50 month. Petrol to pharmacy daily £100 month. Mobile phone £45 month. Looking after her children full time £800 month. No price to put on lost relationship, lost friendships and family. Lost identity as mother, grandmother.”**

The Cost of Loving is an everyday crisis for families, but it does not attract the same level of attention, sympathy or response.

Through our new Scottish Families strategy, we identify 8 'Big Questions' around the Cost of Loving which we want to answer, to understand, highlight, and reduce these costs for families harmed by alcohol and drug use.

Our Big Questions include complex, uncomfortable and unrecognised issues, such as family members' own serious mental health issues; what life is like for families whose loved ones are in recovery; and the stark implementation gap between what we say we will do in Scotland in policy and strategy, and what actually happens in practice.

**The Cost of Loving is unrelenting and unacceptable. It is time for change.**

<sup>1</sup> You can read about our 'Change Will Come' strategy 2020-23, including progress against our Delivery Plans and top Highlights [here](#).

## Our Five Outcomes

Our Cost of Loving Strategy is based on five Outcomes. These are similar to our previous Outcomes, but they have been slightly amended to make them clearer. These Outcomes act as a framework for all of our work at Scottish Families. We use them to plan and organise our work, and to report on our progress.

- Families are Supported
- Families are Included
- Families are Heard
- Families are Connected
- Families Create Change

## About Scottish Families

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs (Scottish Families) is a national charity which supports anyone concerned about someone else's alcohol or drug use in Scotland. We were established in 2003 by family members themselves, who came together to support each other and to campaign for recognition. This year we are celebrating our 20th birthday!

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

You can find out more about our work at [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk), including [About Us](#), [How We are Funded](#), our [Support Services](#), our latest [Impact Report](#) and more.

This Strategy highlights the big changes and improvements we want to see over the next three years. We will also continue to develop and deliver our core services and programmes. We use a development framework to guide decisions about new opportunities, focusing on developments which will help us SUSTAIN and STRENGTHEN what we already have, or TEST and INFLUENCE new models of practice.

## What Makes You Family?

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.

Family members taking part in our [Ask the Family](#) project (2021) found that an average of 11 people were harmed for each person using alcohol or drugs, across every single type of family relationship (including children, young people and adults) and all social networks (including friends, neighbours and work colleagues).

## We Love Families!

Families are at the heart of everything we do at Scottish Families. Our relationship-based practice with families focuses on trust, respect, compassion and time.

We know that families affected by someone else's substance use are often unsupported, excluded, isolated and judged by others. Many do not feel able to talk to anyone about what is going on, due to the secrecy, shame and stigma of alcohol and drug harm in families.

Our [Ask the Family](#) project (2021) found that on average family members had been harmed by alcohol or drug use for 16 years, but it had taken them 8 years to reach family support for the first time.

We recognise and respect families' strengths, experience and expertise. Together we develop knowledge, skills, confidence, self-care and connections.

## My Family, My Rights

We use a rights-based framework which recognises that family members have the right to health, the right to a life free from the harms of alcohol and drugs, and the right to family life.

As families and carers, they have the right to be supported in their own right, and to be included in their loved one's treatment and care. They also have the right to be active partners in decisions which affect them, and for their views to be heard.

We know that families' rights are rarely recognised or upheld by others. Our role includes supporting them to recognise and access their rights as family members and carers, and to effectively advocate for themselves and their loved ones.

# Our Big Questions: 2023-2026



Our Cost of Loving strategy will answer these 8 Big Questions over the next three years:

## **Families are Supported**

- What is the relationship between neuro-diversity and substance use, and how does this affect families?
- What is the state of family members' own mental health, and how should we highlight and respond to this?

## **Families are Included**

- What can help and support services to involve families in their loved ones' treatment and care, and how can we embed more family-inclusive practice?
- How can we promote more equality and diversity in our work, so all families feel Scottish Families is for them?

## **Families are Heard**

- What is the Cost of Loving for families, and how can it be reduced?
- How do families navigate life after alcohol and drugs?

## **Families are Connected**

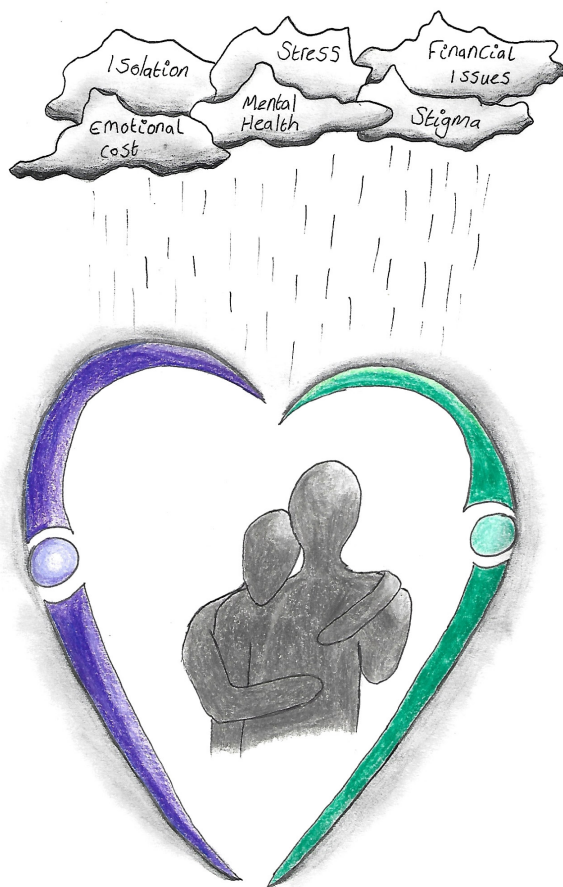
- Can we start a national 'Meet the Family!' conversation about alcohol and drug harm in families, recognising everyone knows someone affected?

## **Families Create Change**

- Can we close the implementation gap in Scotland between good policies and strategies and what actually happens in practice?

## **What actions are we going to take?**

You can read our [Cost of Loving Delivery Plans here](#). Each year we will also publish a Cost of Loving Progress Report alongside the next year's Delivery Plan. The Progress Report will say how we are getting on with putting our Strategy into practice, and answering our 8 Big Questions. This will sit alongside our annual [Impact Report](#) which summarises Scottish Families' overall performance and notes key highlights.



Cover Artwork © Amanda Barr



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