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► [The forgotten carers: support for adult family members affected by a relative's drug problems.](#)

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Copello A., Templeton L.
UK Drug Policy Commission, 2012.

From national and local guidance, commissioners and services, a rounded picture of how much Britain knows about and responds to the needs of the relatives of problem drug users. Increasing recognition of needs has generally yet to be matched by systematic needs assessments or service provision.

Summary The [UK Drug Policy Commission](#) is an independent body which aims to provide objective analysis of the evidence concerning drug policy and practice.

The featured report provides an overview of the key findings and implications of a study by the Commission in to the extent and nature of support provided to adult family members in the UK affected by a relative's drug problems. Detailed findings are in sub-topic reports:

[A review of policy and guidance documents across the UK](#)

[A UK-wide survey of services for adult family members](#)

[Qualitative interviews with commissioners and service providers in England and Scotland](#)

[Supporting adult family members of people with drug problems in Scotland](#)

Main findings

The study found that adults who have a relative with drug problems have increasingly been recognised as a group with significant needs as a result of the stress of living and caring for someone with such problems. Policy has reflected this increased recognition to an extent, but there is still lack of clarity in the identification of this specific group of family members. Children affected by parental drug misuse have increasingly been recognised in policy and provision. Families in general have also been identified as a useful source of support for the treatment and recovery of the person with the drug problem. However, apart from a few exceptions, adult family members as a specific group are not yet clearly identified in policy and guidance.

The authors' conclusions

The work concluded that services should to a greater extent provide help for adult family members in their own rights, as well as to support them as part of the treatment of their drug-using relative. It suggests much more assertive promotion of help for adult relatives, including advertising services at locations like GP surgeries, carers' organisations and local community centres. It also recommends that services take more account of the needs of adult family members, including with routine assessment of adult family members' needs when drug users enter treatment.

Lack of routine data sources providing information on the numbers affected continues to hamper the development of services to meet the full range of needs of adult family members. Therefore adult family members need to be identified as a specific group in national and local policies, accompanied by data collection to provide estimates of need at local level followed by robust systems for monitoring, coordinating and delivering a range of services to respond to the range of need.

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