

A Movement for Change: Celebrities and Politicians Back COA Week 2025 Campaign to Better Support for Children of Alcoholics

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Charities break the silence for Children of Alcoholics Week, 9-15 February 2025

This COA Week, under the theme 'A Movement for Change', celebrity patrons Vicky Pattison, Calum Best, and others are joining forces to call for better support for the millions of children affected by their parent's drinking. With record numbers of people reaching out to Nacoe's helpline, the need for action has never been greater.

Nacoe (the National Association for Children of Alcoholics) has seen a sharp increase in calls relating to bereavement, reflecting new statistics on record alcohol-related deaths in the UK. Analysis of latest call data by Nacoe shows that requests for help from bereaved children of alcoholics have sharply risen from 29% in 2020 to 45% of overall calls in 2024. Too many children are left to navigate the trauma of losing a parent without proper support. The news comes amidst recent ONS figures showing that alcohol-specific deaths are again at a record high.

Nacoe received a record number of requests for help in 2024, totalling 35,721.

This year's campaign is being backed by high-profile supporters, including Vicky Pattison, Calum Best, and Tony Adams, all of whom have spoken openly about the lasting impact of growing up with a parent struggling with alcohol addiction.

Vicky Pattison said:

"There are 2.6 million children living in the UK with parents who drink too much. I want them to know they are not alone. It happened to me and now I support Nacoe so they can support the children."

Influencer Josh Connolly embarks on a powerful journey for change

As part of COA Week, mental health advocate Josh Connolly will embark on 90-mile solo walk to 10 Downing Street, carrying a letter from 12-year-old Amelie, who tragically lost her father to alcohol. Josh, who also lost his own father to alcohol dependency, will deliver Amelie's heartfelt message to government officials, urging them to take action for children in similar situations.

Nacoe is also proud to announce that the Rt Hon Jonathan Ashworth is becoming a patron. A long-time advocate for children of alcoholics, Ashworth will be available for media interviews to discuss the urgent need for better support services.

Nacoe CEO, Hilary Henriques said:

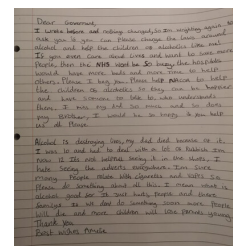
"Behind closed doors, millions of children are living with the chaos, fear, and heartbreak that comes with parental alcoholism. No child should feel alone. COA Week is about breaking the silence and ensuring these children get the help they need."

Children of Alcoholics Week 2025 #COAWeek, 9 to 15 February 2025

COA Week (Children of Alcoholics Week) is the annual calendar event to raise awareness for the 2.6 million children in the UK affected by a parent's drinking.

This year's COA Week theme is 'A Movement for Change'. Too many children and young people feel their parent's alcohol problems are their responsibility and a shameful secret to keep. But finding information and support is vital to break the cycle and make healthy choices.

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We need government, organisations, and the public to be able to recognise signs someone may be struggling because of a parent's drinking and feel confident to signpost to help. It can be life-changing to talk with people who understand and won't judge.

Without support, we know that these are some of the most vulnerable children you can imagine in the United Kingdom. Being much more likely to develop addictions themselves, as well as struggle in school, be in trouble with police, develop an eating disorder, or consider suicide. We can help them take a different path.

Nacoa lead the week's activities focused on furthering the wellbeing of these vulnerable children in the UK. In addition to Josh delivering Amelie's letter to 10 Downing Street, events include Nacoa's COA Week lecture at the House of Commons, COA Week Instagram Live Young People's Panel, and a launch of a new book of letters from people affected by a loved one's addictions. Activities are also held across the globe, including Europe, India, Korea and the USA.

Campaign messages

- The UK Government is failing the most vulnerable children of alcoholics, providing no targeted support.
- Being a child of an alcoholic is 'a thing'.
- Living with parental addiction leaves lasting impacts.
- Children deserve to be helped in their own right.
- With help and support, they can go on to break the cycle of addiction.

Calls to action

- Frontline services need to be more aware of the family secret of addiction.
- The Government should reinstate support for children of alcoholics.
- We need to promote the voices of children of alcoholics in the public sphere.
- Challenge stigma that keeps vulnerable children silenced.

Celebrity support

Nacoa patrons include: Tony Adams OBE, Calum Best, Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, David Coldwell, Lorri Haines, Geraldine James OBE, Cherie Lunghi, Elle Macpherson, Vicky Pattison, Chanita Stephenson and Camilla Tominey.

Quotes:

"News of huge increase of parental alcohol deaths is devastating to hear for children's charities like us, who witness the daily impacts of parental addiction on children. COA Week helps us to remember that alcohol problems affect the whole family. Behind these statistics are mothers and fathers whose children will have been living with the chaos of someone else's drinking. But with greater awareness and support, we will help children to find healthy ways to cope and break the cycle of addiction."

Hilary Henriques MBE, Chief executive of Nacoa UK

'I felt so alone growing up with alcoholism in the family. You blame yourself and wonder what you are doing wrong. Why can't they love you enough to stop? As an adult, I now know that there was nothing I could have done, but I wish I had known Nacoa existed and that you are never alone—there is always someone who understands. Since making my documentary, 'Alcohol, dad, and me', I've met so many amazing people through Nacoa, and I am proud to be part of this work helping some of the most vulnerable children in the UK today.'

Vicky Pattison, TV star, author and podcaster

"We need systematic change to protect children and their families from alcohol harm. The government must create a new alcohol strategy to tackle alcohol harm and include specific measures to support families and protect children."

Professor Ian Gilmore, Chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance

++ Ends ++

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Editors Notes:

- 10,473 deaths from alcohol-specific causes were registered in the UK in 2023, the highest number on record, (ONS)
- There are an estimated 2.6 million children in the UK living with a parent who drink too much.
- Sadly, problems often persist into adulthood. Millions of adults are still affected by their parent's drinking
- Children living with parental alcoholism are:
 - Six times as likely to witness domestic violence
 - Five times as likely to develop an eating problem
 - Three times as likely to consider suicide
 - Twice as likely to experience difficulties at school
 - Three times as likely to develop alcoholism or addiction
 - Twice as likely to be in trouble with the police
- Nacoa (registered charity no. 1009143) was founded in 1990 to provide information, advice and support to everyone affected by a parent's drinking. This is provided through a free and confidential telephone and email helpline, and website and social media. Helpline: 0800 358 3456, Email: helpline@nacoa.org.uk, website: www.nacoa.org.uk
- Nacoa has responded to over 524,000 calls since 1990.
- www.coaweek.org.uk suggests ways to get involved and contains downloadable resources.

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