COA Week – ‘because no child of an alcoholic should ever feel alone’

Monday 13 February, 2017

Shame. Fear. Guilt. Cold nausea. All words that might readily come to mind when you think of alcoholism. What if those words weren’t coming from an alcoholic, but instead from their 8 year old son or daughter?

We are often quick to dismiss problem drinkers as a blight on society and a drain on the NHS but in doing so overlook the profound impact that alcoholism can have on their children. This is why The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa) is once again leading International Children of Alcoholics Week (12 – 18 February 2017) in the UK, the 9th annual awareness campaign aiming to cast a light on the 1 in 5 children across the UK who are struggling with the effects of a parent’s drinking.

Last week in a parliamentary debate in the House of Commons, public health minister Nicola Blackwood was moved to tears after shadow Health Secretary Jonathan Ashworth spoke publicly about his experiences as a child with an alcoholic parent, promising to work with MPs to build a strategy for tacking the problem. The first ever Manifesto for Children of Alcoholics will launch during COA week and is a welcome progress following tireless months of work by the Rt. Hon. Liam Byrne, to ensure a government strategy is in place to support the needs of COAs everywhere.

It has been a breakthrough year for Nacoa and children of alcoholics with public conversations and press coverage of this taboo subject higher than ever. There are an increasing number of calls and emails to the Nacoa helpline as COA’s realise that they are not alone.

“I count myself as lucky, because since I first took the difficult decision to speak out on this a year and a half ago, I have been inundated with stories from colleagues here, whether they are in the House of Lords, staff or fellow right hon. and hon. Members. I have been inundated with stories from the public. I suppose I learned that like all children of alcoholics, we cannot change things for our parents, but we can change things for our children.” Liam Byrne, MP.

Nacoa provide a friendly and anonymous helpline service for children who often feel like they have nowhere to turn; in fact a third of those who contact the charity have told no-one else about their situation. It is an issue which still carries with it a lot of stigma, shame and guilt, yet Nacoa hope that by encouring these conversations in open forums, more will continue to be done to to put these children at the forefront of the issue of alcoholism.

As we enter the 9th year of COA week, Nacoa invite media agencies, businesses, charities and the general public to get involved so we can continue to reach the 2.6 million children in the UK living with a parent who drinks too much.

++ Ends ++

Contact:
Nacoa
t. 0117 924 8005
e. coaweek@nacoa.org.uk

Editors Notes:

- Children of Alcoholics Week is celebrated internationally during the week in which Valentine’s Day falls. 2017 is the 9th year the event has been held in the UK.
- www.coaweek.org.uk offers suggestions of ways to get involved and contains downloadable resources.

Planned events

- MP Liam Byrne will launch the Manifesto for Children of Alcoholics at Nacoa’s David Stafford Memorial Lecture in London.
- Nacoa will be sharing personal stories via social media of high profile supporters including Elle Macpherson, Calum Best, Liam Byrne and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.
- Launch of Nacoa’s long-term Helpline Review

Media:

Related Sectors:

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- Shadow Minister Jonathan Ashworth will promote ‘Information for Teachers’ and ‘Information for Young People’, ‘Some Mums and Dads’ and ‘Information for People affected by their parent’s drinking’.
- Launch of Nacoa message boards providing another avenue of support for COAs.

About Nacoa

Sadly, problems don’t disappear when children move away from home or reach adulthood. Millions of adults are still affected by their parent’s drinking and the effects of growing up with alcohol problems.

- 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
- Twice 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. Helpline: 0800 358 3456, Email: helpline@nacoa.org.uk, website: www.nacoa.org.uk

Nacoa has had over a million contacts in the last 15 years via phone, email & website.

Company Contact:

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Nacoa

T. 0117 924 8005
E. communications@nacoa.org.uk
W. https://nacoa.org.uk

Additional Contact(s):
Communications lead: Piers Henriques, 0785 553 3962

View Online

Additional Assets:
Children of Alcoholics Week poster
http://www.coaweek.org.uk
www.nacoa.org.uk

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.nacoa.pressat.co.uk