# QAADRANT

Winter 2024-25

## Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs

# Feeding recovery

Making and sharing food as a way to reduce alcohol-related harm *pages 3-4*

**'I have held back from sharing the full story' –** finding the courage to be open *page 5*

**'Rapacious' -** Ian Duncan-Smith condemns the gambling industry's practices *page 6*

# QAADNET: 'Above and Beyond – the key role families play in recovery'

*For our latest online QAADNET session on 12th October, we welcomed our speaker, ADFAM's Rob Stebbings (Policy and Communications Lead).*

Rob began by saying that around 5m (1 in 10) adults are affected by a relative's or friend's substance use in the UK, and 3m children live with parental alcohol problems. In addition to supporting families directly, ADFAM has run courses for 500 professionals this year, including drug and alcohol treatment workers, teachers, social workers and prison staff, to improve their understanding of how addiction affects close others. He highlighted several examples of ADFAM's research:

- '*State of the Family Support Sector*'[1], asked practitioners about the impact of the current drug strategy[2]. Only 21% of service users had received any support and the report concluded that it has proved a missed opportunity for improving family support.
- *'Alcohol and Intimate Partner Relationships'*[3] explored the patterns and triggers leading to relationship harm, specifically the breakdown of trust and deterioration of intimacy, intellectual and emotional connection. Only half of respondents had sought help - or known that it was available. Importantly, Rob stressed that drinking *does not have to be either heavy or frequent for it to damage relationships.*
- *'The effects of the cost of living crisis on families and friends of someone with a substance use problem'*[4] looked at how coping with a loved one's addiction has compounded financial stress in recent times. Two thirds of respondents said it had affected their mental health, with over half saying it was a struggle to pay for even basic necessities.

Rob then gave the key findings from ADFAM's recent '*Above and Beyond*' report (see QAADRANT Autumn 2024), and its work with the Alcohol & Families Alliance, the Anti-Stigma Network, Collective Voice, and Kinship Care Alliance, campaigning for policy change.

Key recommendations include:

- funding for specialist drug and alcohol family support services
- tackling drug and alcohol- related deaths; supporting bereaved families
- a new national alcohol strategy.

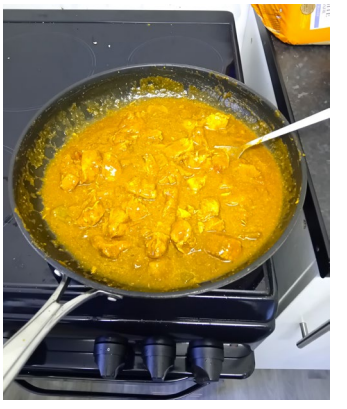
*Rob's talk was recorded and can be viewed via our website: www.qaad.org/events where you can also view his presentation slides.*

[1] https://adfam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/State-of-the-Family-Support-Sector-2023.pdf
[2] *'From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives'* (2021)
[3] https://adfam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Alcohol-and-Intimate-Partner-Relationships-Research-Report-2023.pdf
[4] https://adfam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Adfam-Cost-of-Living-Research.pdf

On 12th December, ADFAM is holding a fundraising carol concert at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street. Details of how to book tickets can be found here: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/adfam-carol-concert-2024-tickets

# Feeding Recovery - making and sharing food as a way to reduce alcohol-related harm

*QAAD trustee, Andrew Misell (Cardiff LM and Director for Wales at Alcohol Change UK), describes the charity's innovative project based in south Wales.*



Since the earliest times, the making and sharing of food – the breaking of bread together – has been one of the main ways we humans have connected with each other. As well as sustaining our bodies, food brings us together and brings us satisfaction and joy. Most of us have a favourite food that we find especially comforting; and when someone offers to make us a meal, we generally take it as a good sign – that they wish to welcome us and take care of us. In short, food matters. So, what happens when it's relegated to a minor role in someone's life? Or next to no role at all?

The World Health Organisation describes dependence on alcohol (or any other substance) as a situation in which '*the use of a substance takes on a much higher priority than other behaviours that once had greater value'* leading to a *'progressive neglect of alternative pleasures or interests'*. One of the first that very heavy alcohol use often displaces is food, and people who are alcohol-dependent are often underfed, underweight and malnourished. That's what motivated us to establish the Feeding Recovery Project, to seek to better understand the poor nutrition and social isolation that often go hand-in-hand with long-term alcohol problems, and explore how connecting with others over food could help reduce alcohol-related harm.

We started in 2019 with a piece of research we commissioned from researchers at Swansea University.[1] They interviewed people in south Wales who were accessing support for alcohol issues about their relationship with food and found that interviewees gave a range of reasons why they were eating less (or not eating at all) during periods of heavy alcohol use:

- A lack of desire for food was a common theme, often because drinking large amounts of alcohol left people feeling too full, too unwell or too lethargic to eat.
- Alcohol-dependency also deprived many people of the daily routine of meal times that provides a framework for regular eating.
- Unsurprisingly, several said that their lack of enthusiasm for food was part of their generally low self-esteem – a sense that they did not deserve to be fed and looked after.

But encouragingly, as well as talking about food's reduced role in their lives, interviewees often expressed a real longing to eat more and better food and, in particular, to enjoy the social aspects of eating again. That was what we wanted to work on. After a few false starts, the Feeding Recovery Project began in earnest in July 2024 with the help of a small Welsh Government grant.

The project is a simple one in essence. Building on Swansea University's work, we've been sitting down with people who

are struggling with a variety of issues – alcohol, other drugs, domestic abuse, criminal convictions – who are attending cooking and food-sharing sessions at two centres in south Wales. We've been asking them why they come, what they get out of it, and what they think are the elements of a successful cooking and eating programme.

What we've found out so far is unsurprising but profound, and we're hoping it will offer some useful pointers to how we can help more alcohol-dependent people restart their relationship with food. Here's what people have told us:

- **They want connection**: People enjoy eating, but the thing they enjoy most of all is eating and talking with others, and making friends.
- **They want choices:** Many people feel they have little autonomy in their lives, and giving them the chance to make positive choices about what they want to eat helps them feel more at ease and more in control. It can be a stepping stone to retaking control of other aspects of their lives.
- **They want a safe place to be themselves**: People want to feel relaxed and welcome; they don't want to be judged.
- **They want to eat with dignity:** People wany to enjoy their food in a dignified environment – one that feels like a restaurant or a home, not a soup kitchen.
- **And, finally, food can fill more than one gap:** As well as filling their stomachs, people have told us that attending cooking and eating sessions is filling up gaps in their day when they might otherwise be bored and unoccupied or using alcohol to pass the time.

We'll be continuing the research until the end of this year, and aim to publish a Feeding Recovery Handbook in early 2025 to help agencies across the UK better support people to make and enjoy food as part of their recovery from alcohol and/or other drugs.

*For more information on the project, contact: andrew.misell@alcoholchange.org.uk*

[1] https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/eating-and-drinking-the-complicated-relationship-between-alcohol-and-disordered-eating

**QAADNET Meeting - save the date:** Saturday 25th January 10am-1pm

## 'Gambling advertising - are restrictions the key to broader change of the gambling industry?'

**Our speaker will be Will Prochaska, Director, Coalition to End Gambling Advertising (CEGA)***

Will is a leading gambling reform campaigner who worked previously for Gambling with Lives. He has provided evidence to the Commons Select Committee on Gambling and the APPG on Gambling Harm. He appears regularly in the media to press for a ban on gambling advertisements and promotions.

**To register for this event, please contact Alison who will send you joining details.**

# ‘I have held back from sharing the full story’

*In this piece, Valda Dagnell (Taunton AM) offers her reflections on feelings which emerged during QAAD’s conference in July.*

The people and the issues I found at the conference have brought up many questions for me, personally as an ally to a family member fighting addiction, and with regard to the Quaker testimonies, particularly that of truth. I realise I have not been truthful with others, or myself, about the situation in which I find myself. I don’t think I have actually lied as such, but I do know that the stigma surrounding addiction means I have held back from sharing the full story. And yes, of course, this is in part to protect my ‘close other’ - I have no wish for them to be labelled before they have even been met, no wish for everything they say or do to be seen through that light.

But the other part of my not being completely open and honest are feelings of shame and blame - that I allowed this to happen, turned a blind eye, did not want to know, that I conned myself into believing they were just going through a phase. I realise that at some level I chose to ignore the signs of their difficulties, deep hurts, and struggle with coping with life. Looking back, I see that I felt out of my depth - ignorance, stigma and shame prevented me from accessing the help and support that might, perhaps, have changed their path into addiction.

It’s a long and hard road to full recovery. How much of our previous life do we need to leave behind, lose perhaps forever, in order to be safe and protect ourselves from heading back down the route to addiction? Our partners? friends? homes? It is small surprise that many who struggle with addiction go back to it, return to it as the place where they are accepted for who they are, warts and all. Until we can all be open, until we can be honest, until we can be accepting and truly loving to others, and ourselves, then we are fighting a losing battle against the tide of addiction which seems to be swamping our society.

I’m not sure what practical effect my finally recognising and owning all this may have - I have a lot of work to do to come to terms with it all. I would love to hear from other local Friends who have been involved in the journey through addiction, whether personally or as a close other/ally, to share our experiences and find a way to take it forward. In the usual language of Friends – ‘I hope so!’

*‘Hope means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action, action is impossible without hope.’*

*‘It’s important to say what hope is not: it is not the belief that everything was, is, or will be fine. The evidence is all around us of tremendous suffering and tremendous destruction. The hope I’m interested in is about broad perspectives with specific possibilities, ones that invite or demand that we act. It’s also not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse narrative. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings.’*

***Rebecca Solnit***

# ‘Rapacious’ Ian Duncan-Smith condemns the gambling industry’s practices

Rapacious. The word jumped out of the radio during Ian Duncan-Smith’s interview on the Today programme on 8th November. It was the day after the Gambling Commission had released data from its annual Young People and Gambling survey. A quarter of all respondents had spent their own money on gambling in the previous year. Most worryingly, there was a ‘*statistically significant increase*’ in the proportion of 11-17 year olds identified as having a gambling problem: from 0.7% in 2023 to 1.5% in 2024.


Duncan-Smith, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gambling Reform, said: *‘The gambling companies spend £1.5bn on advertising and they use ruthlessly apps… to get to younger people. They’re rapacious. The damage that’s being caused is quite astonishing.’* He cited public surveys which found that ‘*51% of all people think that gambling advertising, promotion and sponsorship should be banned and 78% think that nobody under 18 should be exposed in any way to gambling advertising.’*

He confirmed that the APPG ‘*had a row’* with the previous government because it had not inacluded advertising restrictions in the White Paper. He also agreed that donations to Conservative and Labour MPs are a problem: *‘You’ve got to detach that sort of thing from your policy. I would advise political parties to sup with a very long spoon on these companies. They don’t care about the harms they create.’* He stressed that ‘*the present government seems to be taking its time over this. But we think it’s urgent that they should add the extra strength on real, serious limits on gambling advertising, which is appalling.’*

Duncan-Smith was a key speaker at the Gambling Advertising Summit on 12th September, hosted by the Peers for Gambling Reform group. Group members Lord Foster of Bath and the Bishop of St Albans also spoke, as did several people with lived experience of gambling harm, academics, and campaigners. All called for the new government to review the White Paper to include significant restrictions - or a ban - on gambling advertising, marketing and sponsorship.

**Save the date:** Saturday 1st March 10am-1pm Online

**‘Alcohol and Ireland - campaigning for change’**

**Speaker: Sheila Gilheany, Chief Executive Officer, Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI)**

Since 2019, Sheila has led AAI’s campaign for the reform of alcohol advertising, pricing and labelling, working nationally and with Northern Irish colleagues. She will share her experience and reflections on what needs to be done to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve public health in Ireland.

# Ron Barden retires as QAAD Treasurer

My initial memory of Ron is my first trustee meeting in a cramped basement room off Oxford Street, packed in shoulder to shoulder. Even in that setting, he stood out as a source of knowledge and experience among Quakers of similar standing. He has remained a solid presence, guiding us within our means, whilst ensuring we remained a significant force within Friends. His service has been outstanding and effective. This impression of Ron being a 'weighty Quaker' rapidly evolved at my first Woodbrooke conference. On those occasions, Saturday evening was entertainment time. With a large attendance, there was a significant pool of talent, but the magician in the man appeared when this warm member of the Magic Circle strutted his stuff; the other side of this cool administrator was revealed. Ever since, I have always had the picture of the other side of this often inscrutable, dependable, pragmatic, giant of a man in the back of my mind, knowing this was part of what would have been going on inside him. He will be missed.

*Tim James, Trustee*

This autumn marks Ron's retirement as our treasurer and trustee after 27-years' faithful service. He has proved a steady hand on the charity's financial tiller, and a wise and thoughtful Friend to trustees past and present. As Director, I have valued his experience and support greatly since we met in 2017. It will not be the same without him!

*Alison Mather*

It was an education to work with Ron from my appointment in 2000 to my retirement in 2017. He has the knack of asking penetrating questions, and particularly of separating 'process' from the central purpose of doing something. Would it make a real difference or was it just an activity I was proposing? Anticipating these questions and having an answer for them could be stressful - but it was improving! Alongside this I remember Ron as Treasurer taking the management of funds with the utmost seriousness, but managing to make his reports at meetings humorous - nay, fun! What wonderful service you've given, Ron. Happy retirement.

*Helena Chambers (Former QAAD Director)*

## Have you looked at the QAAD website recently?

Please visit www.qaaad.org for information about QAAD, news of events for Friends, and details of our public issues work.

## Thank you for your support

We have felt cheered and supported by the generous donations we have continued to receive from individuals, Meetings and Trusts during this difficult time. Donations are significant in two ways - they make us feel that our work is valued, and they give QAAD a longer-term future. In order to continue our work, we need to continue to draw down from our reserves which, of course, are not unlimited. Please send your donation to: **Ron Barden, Treasurer, 33 Booth Lane North, Northampton, NN3 6JQ.** Alternatively, if you would prefer to donate using a BACS transfer, our banks details are:

**Account Name: Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs**

**A/C No: 31452673 Sort code: 400327.**

**If you can Gift Aid your donation, it will be enhanced by 25p for each £. Please complete the form below and return it with your donation.**

**I am a UK Taxpayer and want QAAD to treat all donations I have made for the past four years, and all future donations I make from the date of this declaration, as Gift Aid Donations until I notify you otherwise.**

.....

**I understand that I must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax reclaimed on my donations in the appropriate tax year. I understand that if I pay less Income and/or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay back any difference.**

Name ..... Signature ..... Date .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

## Your voice

QAADRANT is enriched by different voices and ideas. We are always pleased and grateful to receive contributions of any length from Friends. If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please email or write to our Director by Thursday 31st October.

## Contacting QAAD

If you would like to contact QAAD for any reason, please write to our Director, Alison Mather, by post: PO Box 34, Bristol BS6 5AS or email: alison@qaad.org

You are also welcome to call her: 0117 9246981. All contact is held in strict confidence.