

Hidden Harm: the impact of addiction on children & families

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Presentation Outline

- Conceptual framework for studying alcohol's harm to others
- Risk pyramid for children and families
- Impact of parental drinking on children
- Frontline staff experiences
- Policy Implications
- Mutli-layered responses

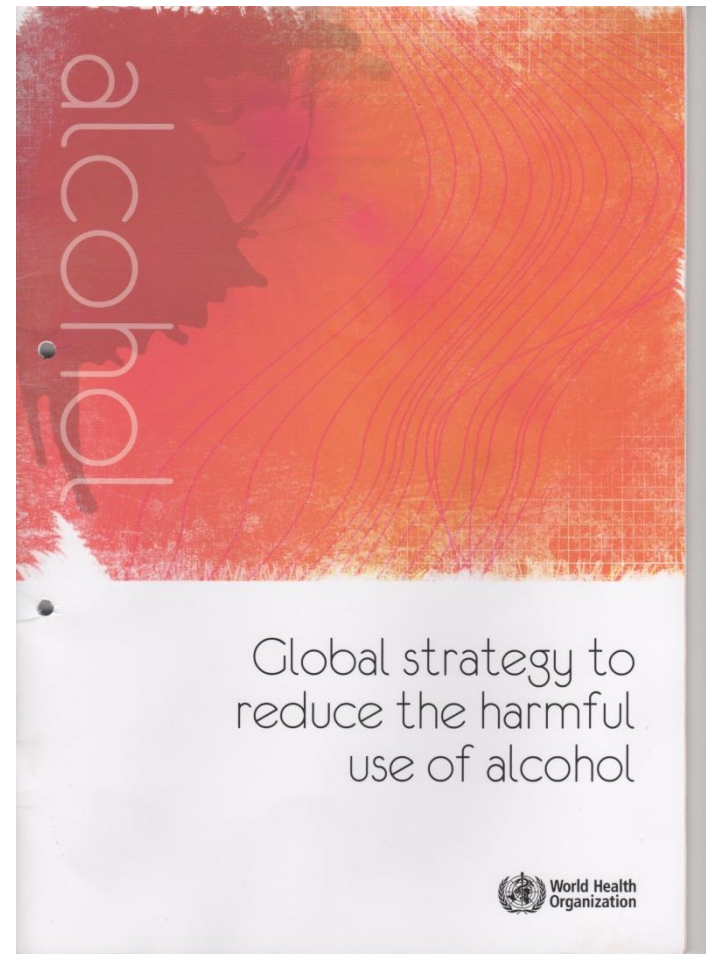
Alcohol's harm to others

- Neglect or abuse – to a child, to a partner
- Injuries – assault, homicide, traffic crashes, workplace accidents
- Default on social role - as a family member, friend or worker
- Property damage – to clothing, car or house
- Toxic effect on other (FAS)
- Loss of amenity or peace of mind – kept awake, being frightened

Source: Room R (2011). The harm of alcohol to others. WHO Collaborative project

Context - International

- WHO 2010 – Alcohol's harm to others (AH20) from drinking requires special attention
- Priority area for WHO international research
- International Group for Studies of Alcohol's Harm to Others (IGSAHO)





Aim of study (2011)

- ❑ To profile children's exposure to risks from parental/ adults drinking in Ireland
- *Gather new information*
- *Examine existing data with a 'new eye'*
- *Discuss with frontline staff who work with children and families*

Hope A. (2011). Hidden Realities: Children's exposure to risks from parental drinking in Ireland. NWAf

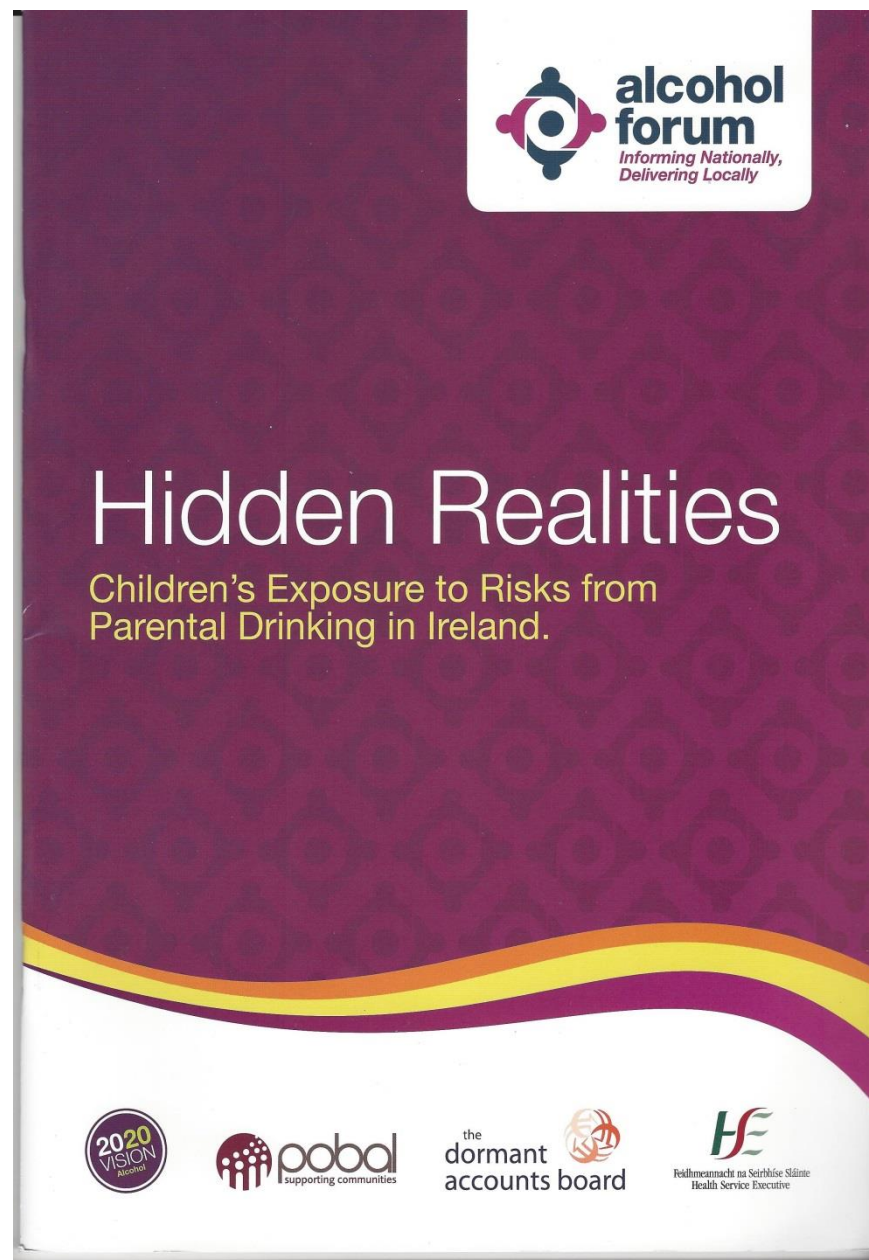


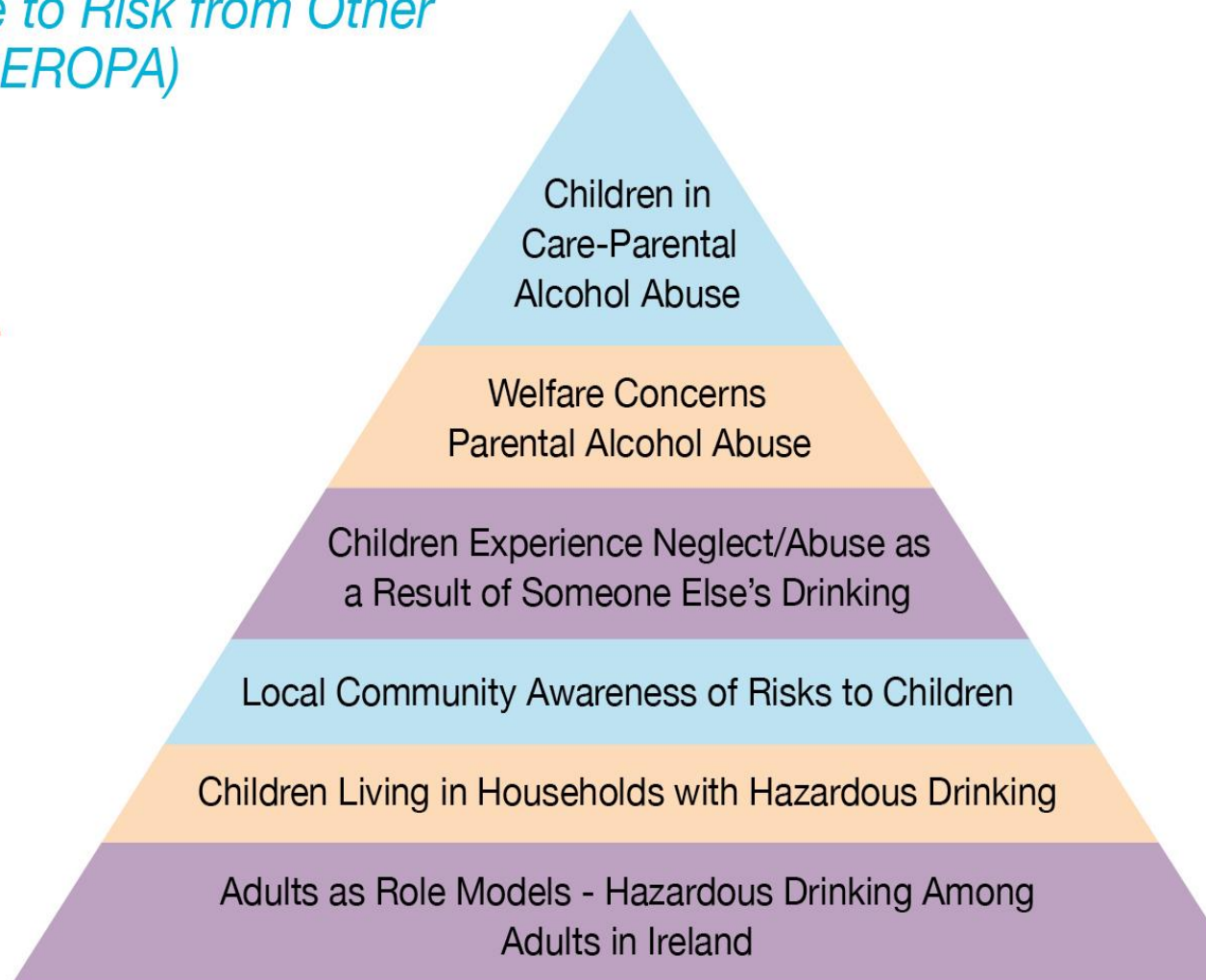
Figure: 1

The conceptual base of this study



Children's Exposure to Risk from Other People's Alcohol (CEROPA)

Increase in Severity



Hidden Realities

Report – November 2011

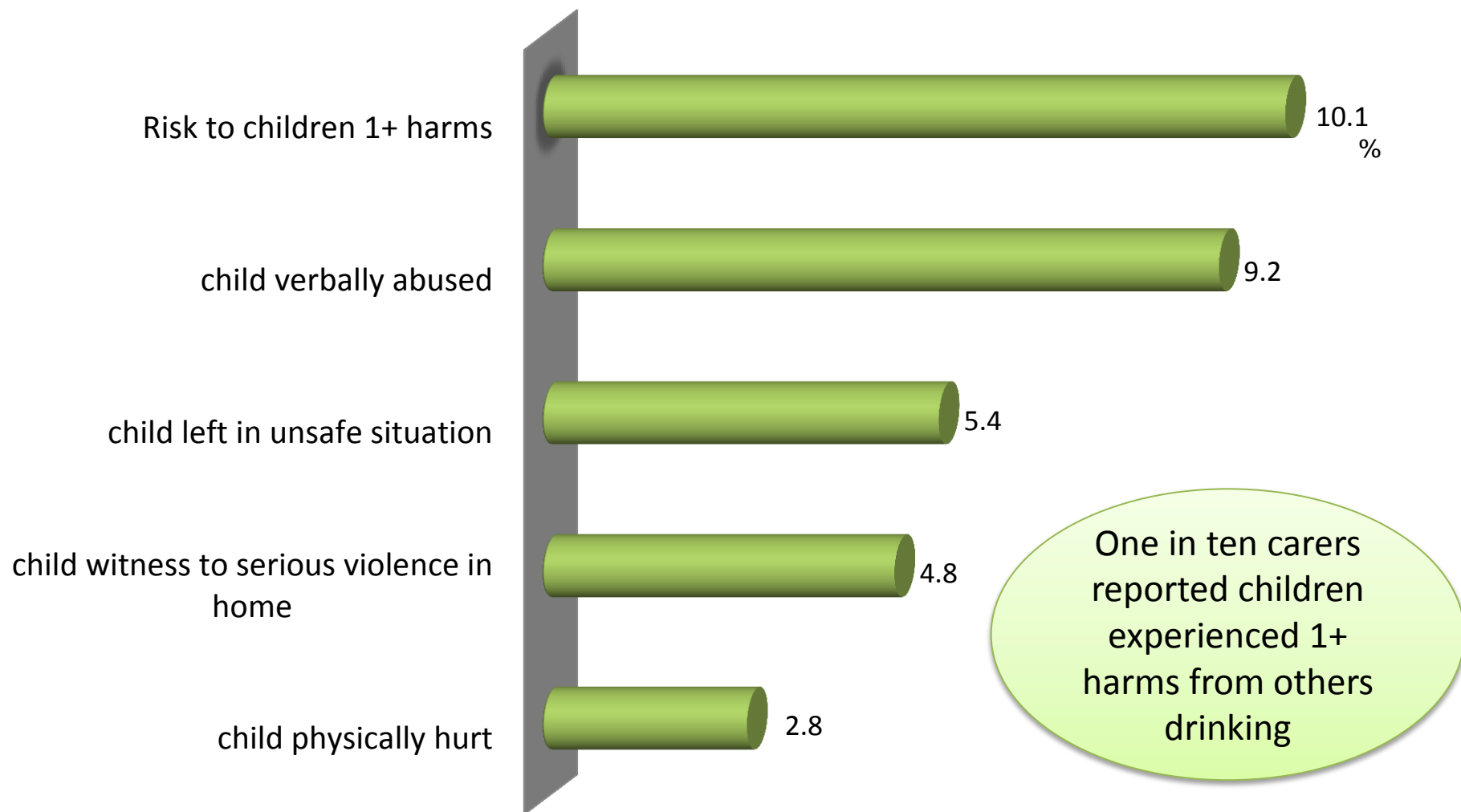
Impact of parental drinking on children - surveys

- **Hidden Realities Report** (Hope 2011)
 - 56% of adults, who had children living with them reported regular hazardous drinking
 - *Local communities aware of exposure to risk for children, in particular children being verbally abused and children left in unsafe situations*
- **ISPCC Report (2010)**
 - *One in eleven young people (12-18 yrs.) said that parental alcohol use had a negative affect on them*
 - *Emotional impacts, abuse and violence, family relations, changes in parental behaviour and neglect*





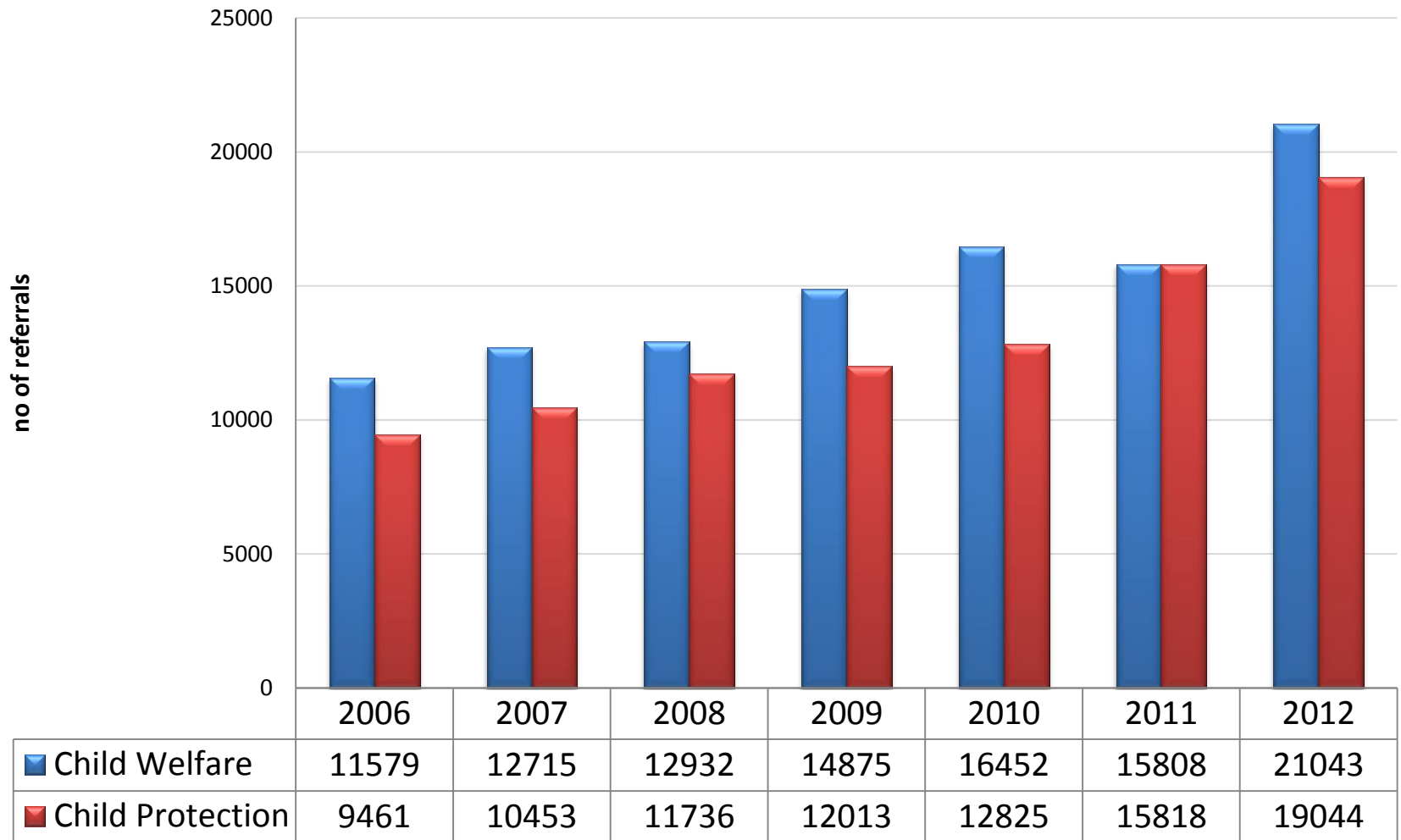
Alcohol's harm to children due to others drinking



Impact of adult drinking on children – child protection data

- **Hidden Realities Report** (Hope 2011)
 - One in seven child welfare concerns involved family members who were abusing alcohol/drugs
 - Alcohol abuse mentioned in one of every three child abuse cases in NW
 - Parental alcohol abuse interacted with several other issues
 - Child out of control due to behavioral problems
 - Domestic violence,
 - Mental health problems,
 - Parent unable to cope

Child Welfare and Protection Referrals to HSE, 2006-2012

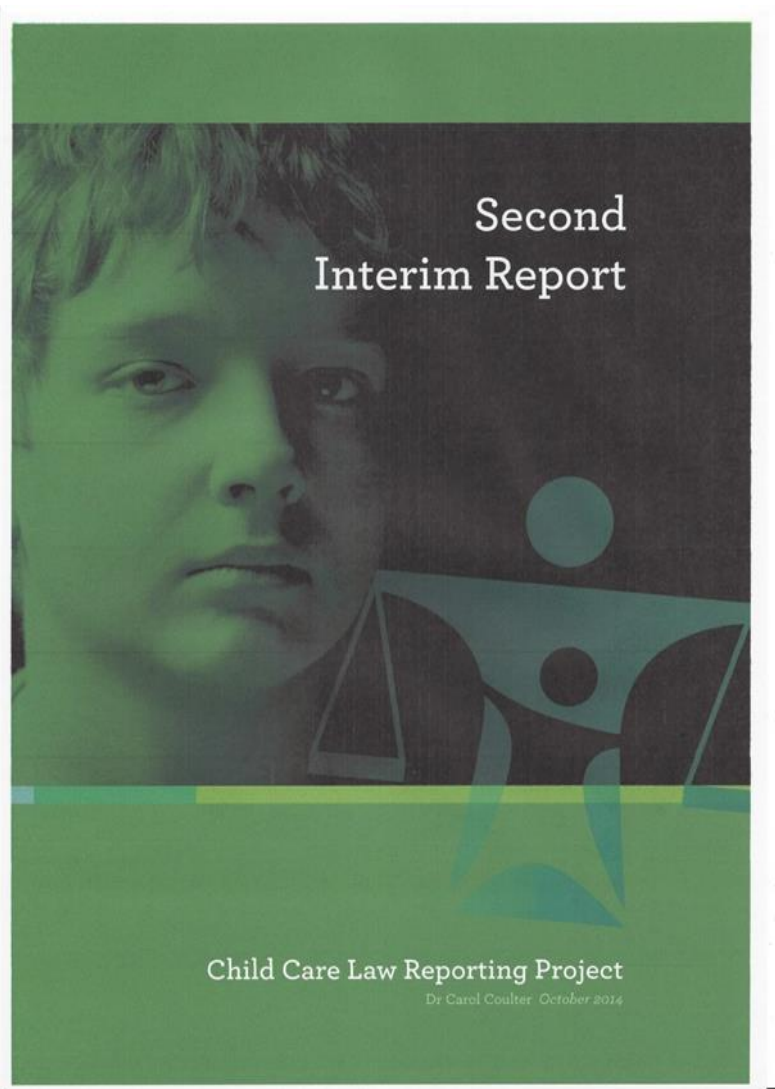


Source: Child and Family Agency .(2012) Review of Adequacy for HSE Children and Family services 2012

Primary Reason for Welfare concern following initial assessment (2010)

Family problems	69.8%
Child problems	30.2%

Family Problems:	
Family member abusing drugs/alcohol	15.9%
Parent separation/other disharmony in home	13.6%
Parent unable to cope	8.4%
Mental health problems in other family members	5.8%
Family difficulty re housing/finance	4.7%
Domestic violence	4.6%
Other	15.2%



- Sept 2013-mid July 2014
- 486 Cases
- 864 Children

Reasons for seeking Court Orders

Reasons	Number	%
Parental disability	73	15.0
Parental drug abuse	64	13.2
Neglect	61	12.6
Multiple	60	12.3
Parental alcohol abuse	50	10.3
Physical/emotional abuse	45	9.3
Other	27	5.6
Parent absent/deceased	24	4.9
Sexual abuse	23	4.7
Childs risk taking	18	3.7
Not recorded	15	3.1
Domestic violence	13	2.7
Trafficked/abandoned	6	1.2



88% were Irish
 39% were divorced/separated
 35% were single

Frontline Staff Experiences



Scotland (2013)

Commissioned by
Alcohol Focus Scotland

Research Team

- Ann Hope
- Jennifer Curran
- Gillian Bell
- Alison Platts



Unrecognised and under-reported:
the impact of alcohol on people other
than the drinker in Scotland.





One part of study

Case Study, Edinburgh

Findings from 16 agency interviews from the perspective of those who experience harm from others drinking, as described by frontline staff

Experiences as a result of others drinking

- **Family disharmony** -relationship problems, tension, arguments, unpredictability and chaotic lifestyles
- **Impact on children** – worry, fear and uncertainty –can lead to neglect and poor school attendance
- **Communities-** experience noise, verbal abuse and disturbances
- **Public service providers**



Living with a problem drinker affects the whole family, like ripples in a pond

People don't realise that their binge drinking can have a negative effect on others. The perspective is that harm is caused by dependent drinkers

The problem is that alcohol doesn't come as an issue on its own . . . Drugs and mental health issues can often also be present





Frontline Staff experiences

Role of alcohol in family support services NW

- A sense of ‘swimming against the tide’
- Damaging drinking culture – acceptance of getting drunk
- Burden children bear due to parental alcohol abuse
 - Hidden secrets
 - Care role reversal
 - Impact on social life – making friends, schooling, bullying, isolation
 - Survival instinct
- Staff intervention on alcohol occurs at the extreme end of alcohol abuse/ crisis point
- Many family support services in NW, but few are evaluated on outcomes

Policy implications ?

- **Alcohol related harm is a much bigger problem when AH20 is added**
- **Burden is high, in terms of economic costs, service provision and quality of life**
- **AH20 reach impacts on children, families, friends, work colleagues and the wider community**
- **Corrosive effect on well-being & quality of life**
- **AH20 a significant public policy issue**

Multi-layered Policy Responses

1. Tertiary prevention responses

- Provide intensive support to families in crisis
- **Pay attention to multiple risk factors (mental health, domestic violence, housing, work)**
- Provide community supports & family based interventions
- **Provide support to grandparents and other carers**
- Build capacity of CPS workers to evaluate AOD issues

2. Secondary prevention responses

- Regularly gather information about family situations of AOD clients
- **Needs of family and drinker - not always the same**
- Are AOD services in a position to respond to children of their clients with AOD problems?
- **Children First guidance important in helping to focus on risks to children**
- Linkages between agencies central to supportive environment for children

3. Primary prevention responses

- Focus on community and societal level factors
- **Changing drinking culture**
 - Risky drinking or drinking to intoxication around children
 - Family & School based activities alcohol free
- **Implement effective alcohol policies**
 - Best 3 buys for population based approach(WHO)

WHO 'Top 10 Best buys' package for population-based approaches

- Smoke-free environments
- Warning about the dangers of tobacco use
- Bans on tobacco advertising
- Raising taxes on tobacco
- Raising taxes on alcohol
- Restricting access to retail alcohol
- Bans on alcohol advertising
- Reducing salt intake and salt content of food
- Replacing trans-fat in food with polyunsaturated fat
- Promoting public awareness about diet and physical activity

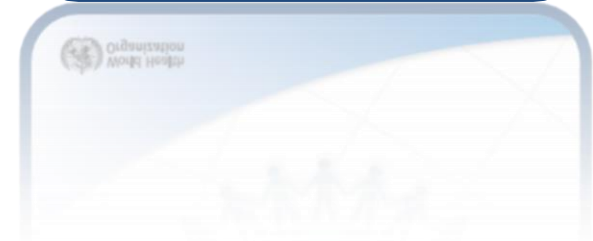


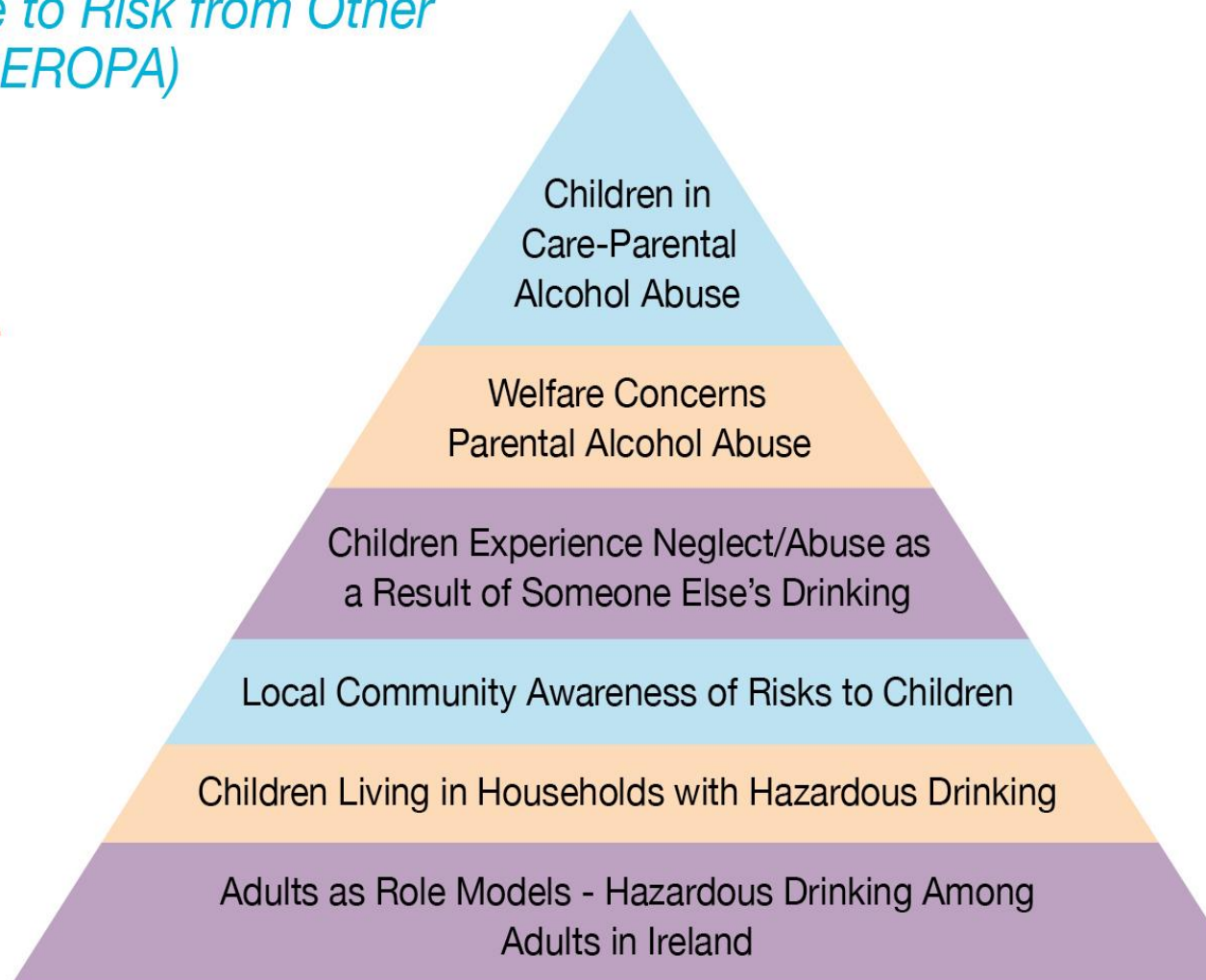
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THANK YOU

