

Fragile Childhood

Preventing and reducing the impacts of
parental alcohol misuse on children

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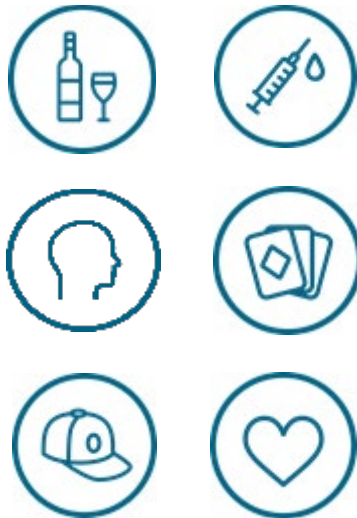
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A-Clinic Foundation since 1955

A Finnish NGO working in the fields of substance use, addictions and mental health in close cooperation with treatment providers.



Projects and research activity on:

- New Psychoactive Substances,
- psychosocial wellbeing
- affected family members,
- gambling,
- doping substances in recreational sports
- opioid substitution treatment, and
- risk for criminality or early death of patients with SUD
- Street work: needle exchange, HIV-hepatitis C -testing, health counselling.



A-Clinic Ltd. owned by A-Clinic Foundation

- Wide range of substance abuse and mental health services employing 500 health care professionals.
- Services include A-Clinics, digital services, e-services, substitution treatment clinics and family and youth services.
- Inpatient services are offered at A-Clinic communities and detoxification units and centers.
- Addiction Hospital (available nationwide) is the only specialised hospital for the treatment of addictions in Finland.
- Housing services, such as supported accommodation.



Family members and rights of the child in A-Clinic Foundation Strategy 2020-2023

Access to information will improve and inclusion will be strengthened for AFMs.

Understanding of the overgenerational nature of addiction problems and trauma awareness is increasing.

AFMs access to care and to services will improve.

Child sensitivity in addiction services is increasing.



Prevalence of AFMs in Finland

(population 5,5m)



16% Women
6% Men

Have experienced *severe* harms due to family member's or close-one's alcohol use in the past year. [1].



16-20 year-olds

7 % often
22 % sometimes

experience harms due to parental drinking [2]



65 000 – 70 000 children

whose at least one parent has a serious substance abuse problem. [3]

Childhood and Families -team

Fragile Childhood: help&support for ACOAs, motivating professional, raising awareness. lasinenlapsuus.fi/en

Shadow World: Support & counselling for COAs varjomaailma.fi/en

Addiction Link: Online service for substance abusers, AFMs, professionals. addictionlink.fi

YouthLink: A web site targeted to young people (12–20yrs) nuortenlinkki.fi

Gambling co-project: Building service chains, training professionals, providing support for gamblers and AFMs



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Fragile Childhood since 1986 – early years

- ✓ Telephone service
- ✓ Educational videos (VHS)
- ✓ Posters and postcards
- ✓ Translated books e.g. Cork: Forgotten Children [4], Black: I wish Dad wouldn't Drink [5]
- ✓ Leaflets
- ✓ Website
- ✓ Trainings for professionals
- ✓ Surveys 1994, 2004 [6]

Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations <https://www.stea.fi/web/en/frontpage> 3-4 projects → more permanent funding, but reporting and applying on yearly basis.





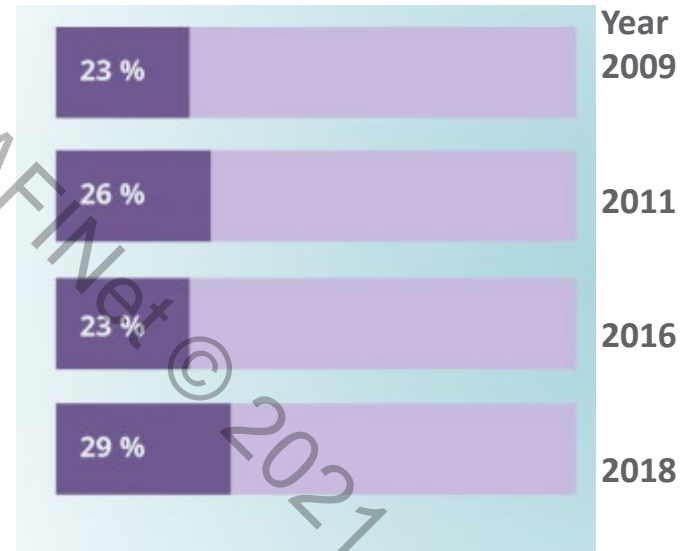
Fragile Childhood Surveys [7]

Excessive drinking in childhood

– Did you experience harms due to parental drinking?

Often, sometimes.

Note: Comparison not possible. Variable research settings, methods, target groups (adults, young, even children with parental consent).





Fragile Childhood Campaigns

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9 645 892 views in Youtube

[Youtube.com/lasinenlapsuus](https://www.youtube.com/lasinenlapsuus)



Orphanage



Voice to a Child



Monsters



Shadow World launch in 2008

Comic books to all 5-6 graders, 71 500 copies at schools [8]

Reception survey of 900 teachers

Website – Interaction

- Piloting counselled online group for young in Addiction link.
- Study online – published article [9]





Counselled peer support groups online for Young people in Shadow World

Two 9-10 week groups per year
(14-17yrs and 17-25 yrs)

Approx 10 anonymous participants sign up with nicknames for each group

Participants reached mainly via social media and networking

2 professional counsellors e.g. social worker, psychiatric nurse

+ Administrator

+ Professional guidance and work counsellor

Technical platforms: discussion board and chat

Structured themes / assignments every other week

Regular group chats

Child protection notices when needed together with the young

Rules and ethical guidelines

Data protection



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—it [the group] helped me to see I am not alone in this world, to open up, taught me to trust and to handle my feelings.”



Harms experienced by Young as described by themselves in Shadow World (n=150)





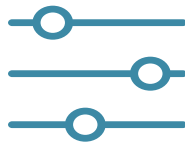
'Competitive agents not invisible victims'



EMOTION REGULATION

**Ability to control
one's own emotional
state.**

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PARTICIPATION

**Being able to
influence and have
control over one's
own life.**

SOCIAL COHESION

**Ability to feel a sense
of social belonging
and to take part in
social relationships.**



RELIABLE ADULT

**At least one reliable
and trustworthy
adult in life.**



Other online interventions for young

Kopstoring in Holland [10]

Gruppel in Sweden for 15-25yrs

Once a week, 1,5h chat 8 weeks + 9th follow up

4-8 participants

1-2 counsellor social work/psychology (2 day training)

Each chat is on different theme

Home assignments in between.

Mi.Spot [11] for 18–25 yrs

- 6 weeks up to 20 young adults
- 6 x 1h professionally facilitated psychoeducational modules delivered online.
- A private, online diary to prompt and encourage participants to apply a cognitive behavioural approach to current stressful situations, with the support of a facilitator.
- Informal chat on threads (topics) initiated by a participant or facilitator.
- 1-to-1 private online counselling sessions with facilitator.
- Weekly activities (video, audio, print resources, and self-monitoring questionnaires) offered as in order to consolidate and extend learning from weekly sessions.



Reaching out to Adult COAs

Information on Web site

Group theme chats every 3 weeks – 1to1 chat counselling with a booking

Counselled peer support groups

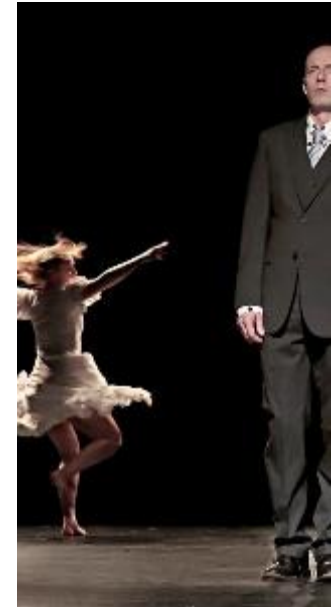
Active in Social Media (in Facebook 9700 followers, reach over million users yearly)

Participate in discussions (articles)

Tight and vast networks (steering groups, projects)

Joint projects with culture field

Theatre play directors, Book authors, Musicians, Documentarists



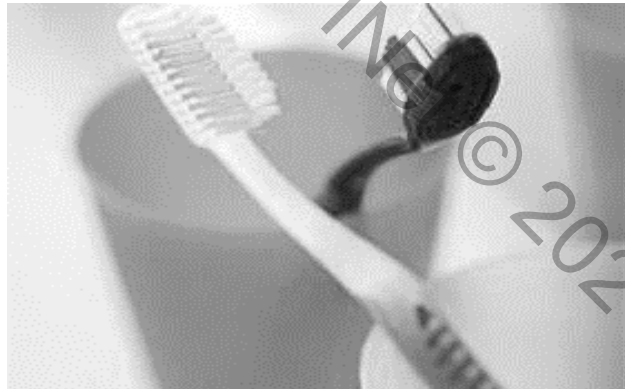


Fragile Childhood in Adulthood

In Work life

In Relationships

In Parenthood



Peer support groups for parents with young children → trained counsellors from local NGOs, organised a seminar in the area. helped with marketing and other arrangements.



Shame



Guilt



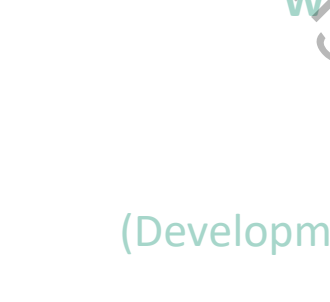
Lojality



**Family
Secrets**



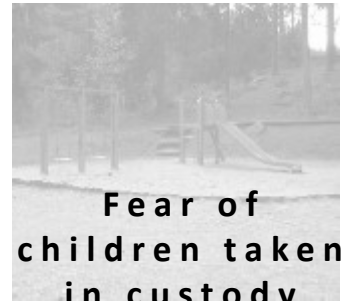
Facades



**Disappointment
in officials**



**No trust in child
protection**



**Fear of
children taken
in custody**

What has prevented help seeking in adulthood as a parent?
(Development work with our focus group i.e. experts by experience)

Now, having children of my own, I have started to think about these things and that over-generational burden I don't want to pass along. By this I don't mean so much about alcohol misuse but bitterness and fixing abnormal behavioral patterns.

– Woman, 32

It's comforting to know, you are all somewhere there, in your own lives, and moving on, even though I think each of us is dragging this hell of a rock sled. You are in my thoughts, be strong! – Woman, 30



Counselled peer support groups for Adults



Peer support provides understanding, comfort and relief not alone with this mind burdening and stressful problem.



Sharing experiences with others reduces the shame and guilt and increases gracious attitude towards oneself.



Many find that things perceived as bad traits or qualities related to their own self are deriving of burdensome childhood.



Questions discussed in groups for Adults



How should I deal with my parent today? Where do I draw my lines?

What do I bring from childhood to my presence?

What type of psychosocial and/or other help would work for me?

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Evaluating the benefits of the groups on a scale

1 *not at all* to 5 *extremely*

Overall average of
Benefit (2020)

4,8





How to build scientific evidence on effectiveness
towards modelling the intervention?

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Motivating professionals working with children, young and families?



https://lasinenlapsuus.fi/sites/default/files/pdf/little_fox_has_a_secret.pdf





Working with professionals in substance abuse services

- Training method for practitioners in the A-clinics (13 audited)
- a parent-only psycho-educational approach based on Beardslee family talk intervention

Let's talk about children - An Effective Child & Family Method

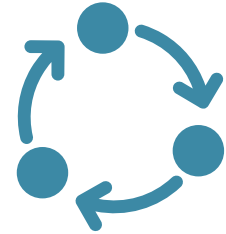
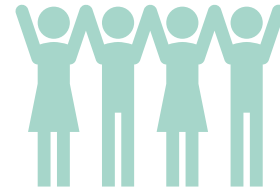
The aim of the Let's talk -intervention is to build a shared understanding between parents, the child and other important persons in the child's life and to find ways of working together to promote wellbeing and prevent problems. A crucial purpose in the LT -process is to make the child's everyday life as good as possible at home, in early childhood education, in school and leisure environments (so-called development environments), taking into account the child's specific needs and life situations. <https://mieli.fi/en/let%E2%80%99s-talk-about-children-lt>





Fragile Childhood in a nutshell (high & low costs)

- ✓ 3,8 person-years + counselling hourly basis
- ✓ It-services, technical development website & chat.
- ✓ Networking with child protection, mental health and family work organisations Officials-Unions-NGOs on national and municipal level.
- ✓ Bringing professionals and practitioners together across sectors, provide tools in trainings & workshops often by invitation & in collaboration.
- ✓ Every day presence in Social media → e.g. sharing news items, administrating Peer support groups in FB.
- ✓ Awareness raising campaigns only with extra funding, even pro-bono 35 000-50 000€. Surveys approx 12 000€.



We are open for collaborating ideas

Experience from EU projects

Coordinated CHALVI

Partnering in CHAPAPs and ALC-VIOL

Partnering in Erasmus+ project ongoing

Areas of expertise on:

Online interventions (peer support groups, theme group chats, 1-1 chats)

Awareness raising campaigns

R & D on face-to-face peer support groups for parents with young children

Social media outreach

Survey design

Tools for professionals (comic book, story book, questionnaire forms, work books)

Thank you!



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[#lasinenlapsuus #fragilechildhood](https://twitter.com/lasinenlapsuus)

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