



Margaret,
Family member
Age: 45
Lives in North
Ayrshire

Background

Margaret has been supporting her adult son through long-term addiction. Before engaging with Harbour Ayrshire, she carried significant guilt, shame, and a sense that she had somehow caused or failed to prevent his addiction. She rarely spoke about the situation due to stigma and embarrassment, often masking her distress from others.

Barriers/ challenges

- **Co-dependency**, which can create complex dynamics, emotional strain, and difficulty setting healthy boundaries
- **Multiagency working between services**, families are often excluded from decision-making and find it difficult to navigate disconnected parts of the system.
- **Professionals don't listen to people with lived experience**, families report feeling unheard, misunderstood, or dismissed by services.
- **Stigma**, associated with having a family member with addiction.
- **Persistent feelings of guilt and shame**, internalised blame that discourages families from seeking support early..
- **Groups don't suit everyone**: men don't generally access family support.

Strengths

- **Listens without judgement**, validates other's emotions
- **Contributes to creating a safe, equal, accepting environment**, where others feel they are not alone
- **Embraces learning**, now able to recognise enabling behaviour and confidently put healthy boundaries in place.
- **Can reflect on her own patterns**, this level of insight supports sustainable recovery for herself and those she supports.

Key motivations

- **To maintain healthy boundaries with her son** - Margaret cares deeply for her son but needs to prioritise her own mental health and stability.
- **To learn about addiction and recovery** - she wants to make informed and confident decisions when seeking support for her son and herself. Margaret can learn and grow in a safe and non-judgemental space.
- **To build a peaceful, hopeful life** - regardless of her son's recovery status.
- **To support other families with similar experiences** - by sharing lived experience, helping to reduce stigma.

CHIME is a recovery framework that describes the key processes that support personal recovery.
Family members told us they experience CHIME as

Connectedness:

- Found a safe, accepting group of people
- No longer feels alone
- Values honest relationships
- Friendships built on truthfulness
- To be able to contact a peer in time of need

Hope and optimism:

- Hearing others' stories and learning that addiction is an illness helped her let go of self-blame
- Now knows she can live a peaceful life even if her loved one remains in active addiction
- Gave her coping tools and a belief in "planting the seed"

Identity:

- Re-discovering who she is beyond her son's addiction
- Feels valued, respected, and able to be her authentic self
- Has overcome stigma

Meaning:

- Finds purpose in sharing her experiences to support others
- Raising awareness and reducing stigma gives her a strong sense of contribution.

Empowerment:

- Increased knowledge about addiction improves ability to set boundaries
- No longer feels guilty for taking responsibility for own recovery
- Uses her experiences to empower others