



# The History of Alcohol & Drugs Action

Alcohol & Drugs Action (formerly Drugs Action) began operating as a charity and company limited by guarantee in June 1986. The organisation was set up in response to a gap in support for people with substance use issues at that time. This included the provision of targeted support to people using volatile substances, young people experimenting with a range of drugs and women dependent on prescribed drugs.

Since 1986, Alcohol & Drugs Action has established trust and credibility amongst individuals with substance use issues. This has extended to family members and local communities in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire in response. ADA's growth is also due to the value it places on partnership working with well-established relationships in place; with Local Authorities, NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs), as well as other third sector organisations; to ensure all working together to best meet the needs in local communities.

There are key milestones in the growth of the organisation:

- Established in 1986 when delivery of ADA services in local communities began.
- In 1992 ADA opened the first specialist needle exchange in the North East of Scotland. Due to the rapid increase in injecting heroin across Scotland in the 1990s, this service expanded rapidly.
- In 1992, ADA began the delivery of a rural drugs outreach service across Aberdeenshire.
- In 1993 ADA established a presence in Craiginches prison providing pre and post release support to prisoners with substance use issues.
- In 1994 ADA set up the first family support group for families affected by drugs or alcohol. This ADA group continues to operate today along with other supports for family members.
- In 1995, ADA began delivering outreach services for women involved in street prostitution. This service developed in line with local need and with support from the Scottish Government's Violence Against Women Unit. ADA operates a range of safety and recovery services for women at risk from gender-based violence and reaches out to young girls at risk from sexual exploitation.
- In 2003, the organisation developed a partnership with Aberlour Childcare Trust, delivering services addressing the needs of children, parents and extended family affected by substance misuse.
- In light of the increasing overlap between drug and alcohol problems, the organisation expanded its portfolio in 2010 when it successfully tendered to deliver alcohol services across Aberdeenshire, quickly developing a reputation as a credible and effective service.
- The organisation has been at the forefront of innovation in effective interventions in the substance use field; and, for example, is developing specialist resources for people using Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs, as well as developing a peer mentoring service for people in HCV treatment.



- The organisation has secured Scottish government funds to extend and upskill its team of volunteers to provide greater support to help people achieve recovery.
- In 2012 and 2018, the organisation successfully re-tendered for the provision of harm reduction and recovery drug services in Aberdeen City. This has resulted in the organisation providing a service 7 days per week at the city centre base and through regeneration areas of the city, enabling seamless, flexible support for people before, during and after treatment.
- As part of this contract, the organisation has taken a lead role in innovatively engaging service users in the Take Home Naloxone Scheme.
- The organisation has proactively developed use of social media for disseminating key messages and launched a new interactive website in the summer of 2014.
- The organisation became the lead provider of third sector alcohol services in Aberdeen in 2014. This includes provision of an integrated alcohol and drugs Direct Access, advice and information service as well as working within the city's Integrated Alcohol Service.
- In 2015, the charity began delivering open access drop-in services across central and south Aberdeenshire, ensuring more people affected by substance use had access to support.
- During 2016, ADA started working within Police Scotland's Kittybrewster custody facility; providing advice, information and support, including Naloxone administration training, dry blood spot testing and one-to-one support to people in custody.
- That year, the charity officially changed its name to Alcohol & Drugs Action to reflect alcohol as core business.
- In 2017, ADA was successful in securing five years of funding as part of a consortium of services, led by Barnardo's, providing early help to families in need of support in Aberdeen city
- In 2018, ADA secured a contract for similar services in Aberdeenshire, alongside Turning Point Scotland and Aberdeen Foyer. ADA also partnered the local recovery community Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR), with a successful funding bid to establish a national piece of learning about recovery 'peer' pathways established through bespoke volunteering practices.
- During 2019, ADA were successful in setting up a formal Project to examine and refine 'trauma informed practice' at an organisation level including peer-led recovery work, partnering with Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen in Recovery (Grow-Free) and health professionals.
- In response to the global coronavirus pandemic, in early 2020, ADA put in place a number of contingencies and radical service adaptations in order to continue to provide information, advice and support to those in need, during difficult and restrictive conditions.
- The most significant initiative introduced to ADA services, was 'Sharp Response', a mobile delivery service of clean injecting equipment to clients in Aberdeen City and parts of Aberdeenshire. This began days after lockdown and quickly expanded to provision of food parcels, mobile telephones to keep people connected, assistance with utility bills and pharmacy deliveries.
- With the roll-out of the Scottish Government's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards, ADA are a central resource in the development and support



of the various standards and their implementation. Additional staffing resource will be deployed during 2022-2023 to further the swift implementation of the Standards across integrated treatment services.

- In 2022, ADA were awarded £500k from the CORRA Foundation, to continue and further develop 'Sharp Response'. The service currently provides daily interventions to those at risk, whilst maintaining a weekly delivery service.
- In 2023, ADA were awarded £29k from the Just Transition Fund, for the purchase of an electric vehicle to sustain the 'Sharp Response' initiative in a more sustainable and environmental fashion.
- Also in 2023, ADA secured the tender for drug and alcohol services for all of the Aberdeenshire area, extending these from central and south shire into the north area.
- During 2023, ADA were successful in applying for funding from the Scottish Government (via CORRA Foundation), for 'Residential Rehabilitation Support' and 'Grow Your Own Routes'. Both Projects commenced successfully in 2023 with funding secured for 4 years and 3 years respectively.