

Speech: PM speech at DrugFam reception

Good afternoon everybody and it's a great pleasure to welcome you all here to Downing Street today. And, as you have heard, we are all here to recognise and celebrate the work that [DrugFam](#) has done over the last 11 years – years of real achievement and I've not only seen the charity grow over those years but also the impact the charity has made. But, I think we can say that the past year has been exceptional even for DrugFam.

This year:

- you have received the Queen Award for Voluntary Service – the highest honour a charity can receive
- you held a major service of celebration and hope at Westminster Abbey – which I am very sorry I was not able to attend,
- and of course Elizabeth received her MBE from Her Majesty the Queen – an honour which was richly deserved

As you've just heard, I have known Elizabeth for well over a decade and she is, of course, a constituent of mine. I remember coming to your home, Elizabeth, and hearing you tell the story of Simon and Nicholas and, sadly, the loss of Nicholas. I think I had tears in my eyes as well as you, as you were telling that story. I've heard Elizabeth speak at events subsequently and I've seen the impact it has on people, when they hear that story, that tragic story, that brings home to people so clearly the impact that drugs can have not just on the individuals but on their whole family as well. What you've built here following the loss of Nick is something of huge value, improving the day to day life of others.

I was proud to serve as a patron of DrugFam before I was appointed Home Secretary. The work you do makes a huge difference. You ensure that families, friends and partners affected by a loved one's addiction get the support they need.

Because when families have to face addiction, they really do need that support. And I think that was one of the elements is that, often for families, it is very difficult to know where to turn, to know what to do for the best. Sometimes, through love, families take steps that they think are the right ones but sadly sometimes are not. And it is for those feelings of helplessness, of shame, of isolation and fear that DrugFam exists today to show people there is someone to help, there is someone there to turn to.

And what has really enabled DrugFam to do that has been the dedication and commitment of all its volunteers, and I am delighted that so many of you are here tonight. Without your generosity and the gift of time which you give to DrugFam nothing it has achieved would have been possible.

So I want to say a huge thank you to all of the staff, trustees, volunteers, patrons, ambassadors, donors, friends and supporters of DrugFam for everything you do. Including Sarah Cooper and her team, who I just met, who

fundraise and deliver the fantastic Summer Ball on an annual basis.

DrugFam volunteers gave over 7,000 hours of their time last year – manning the helpline, volunteering in support groups, and helping with fundraising and governance.

But what is particularly striking is that half of the volunteers have previously accessed DrugFam support themselves – so DrugFam was there for you, and now you are there for other people. You are doing wonderful work and it is hugely appreciated.

We know that we face a huge challenge as a country in overcoming addiction. The Government's Drugs Strategy seeks to protect the most vulnerable, and I'm pleased to say the Home Office minister Victoria Atkins is here at the reception tonight, and to help those with drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around. But no one knows better than the people in this room just how difficult that can be.

There are no quick solutions or easy answers. And for those affected by the addiction of a loved one, the impact can be immense and can last a lifetime. That's why DrugFam's work is so essential – providing long-term support and advice at every stage.

So, Elizabeth, you can be justifiably proud of what you established all those years ago. From your personal tragedy has come a strong charity that is doing so much good in helping the lives of others. But thank you to all those that have joined Elizabeth along the way, some of you who through your own personal tragedy have come to give DrugFam the support it needs to be able to help others. You have achieved a tremendous amount in these last eleven years – and there is so much to celebrate and I am very pleased we have been able to invite you here today to do just that. With the support of everyone here in this room, and many who are not, I am sure that you will go on to achieve even more and help even more people in the future. Thank you.