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**Foster Carers Guidance on Alcohol Consumption**

1. It is important to note that a foster care may have a child in their home who came from a home where substance misuse and alcoholism were present. While it is legal for adults over 18 to drink alcohol as a foster parent this must be done responsibly as it may be an emotional trigger for a child to see it in the home or see a foster parent consume alcohol. Living with a foster carer is for children to have a safe space both physically and emotionally. While alcohol might not be a ‘big deal’ for those who drink responsibly, it is important to be mindful of the potential impact and the role modelling you play in guiding children to responsible drinking especially where this has been endemic generationally in the child’s family structure. This guidance is Warrington’s policy for foster carers on Alcohol consumption. This information should be shared will all foster carers and prospective foster carers, there is a need to understand that alcohol reduced concentration and impairs responses; this may lead to unprofessional conduct. Foster cares have a responsibility to model the sensible use of alcohol to children and young people that live with their family in their care.

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| **Alcohol misuse** - is drinking excessively beyond the recommended limits. The current recommended limits are 21 units per week for adult men and 14 units per week for adult women. A unit of alcohol is 10ml of pure alcohol, which is about half a pint of “normal” strength lager or a single measure (25ml) of spirits. A small glass (125ml) of wine contains about one and a half units of alcohol. The number of units of alcohol is often recorded on the bottle, if you are in any doubt. Men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day and women should not regularly drink more than 2-3 units a day. ‘Regularly’ means drinking this amount every day or most days of the week. It is also recommended that both men and women should have at least two alcohol free days each week. Your health is at risk if you regularly exceed recommended daily limits. |

1. Warrington Borough Council Fostering Policy is clear that our foster carers have a responsibility to our children living with their foster families. We recommend that while looking after children, carers do not have more than two units of alcohol. Carers need to be aware that at least one carer has to be alert to the possibility of an emergency with a child. Carers should not drink alcohol if they need to drive a child anywhere, if they have taken a drink they will need to make other arrangements to have the child taken to meet their emergency need. It is not appropriate for children to see their carers drunk due to the impact of the negative image and message this behaviour models to a child. Please be mindful of you own experiences of being sober and observing others who are drunk and how this is might be perceived by a child.

If a foster carer has been found to be intoxicated in the sole care of a child (regardless of the child’s age) the safeguarding aspect of this behaviour will be considered within a LADO process. The outcome will be considered in an early foster carers review.

There is also clear evidence that parents and carers can influence young people's alcohol use. Children are less likely to drink, or drink less, when parents and carers have strict rules on young people's drinking and show their disapproval of underage drinking rather than adopt a tolerant attitude, and supervise and manage young people's behaviour.

1. **Getting help –** on an individual level if you are concerned or worried about your own or someone else’s drinking contact your GP who will be able to advise you on available services. Other organisations re listed at the end of this policy. You must speak to you fostering social worker who will also be able to work with you to find help and support.
2. **Licensing Laws**

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| **Age**  | **The law in England, Scotland and Wales** |
| Under 5  | It is illegal to give an alcoholic drink to a child under 5 except in certain circumstances (e.g. under medical supervision) |
| Under 14  | A young person under 14 cannot go into the bar of a pub unless the pub has a ‘children’s certificate’. If it does not have one, the child/young person can only go into parts of licensed premises where alcohol is either sold but not drunk (e.g. an off-licence or a sales point away from the pub), or drunk but not sold (e.g. a garden or family room). |
| 14-15 | 14- and 15-year-olds can go anywhere in a pub, but they cannot drink alcohol |
| 16 – 17Under 18  | 16- and 17-year-olds can buy (or be bought) beer or cider (and wine in Scotland) as an accompaniment to a meal, but not in a bar (i.e. only in an area specifically set aside for meals). (**please re foster care guidance below)**Except for 16- or 17-year-olds having a meal, it is against the law for anyone under 18 to buy alcohol in a pub, off-licence, supermarket, or other outlet; or for anyone else to buy alcohol in a pub for someone who is under 18 |

In addition to this the Children act guidance is clear while it is not illegal for parents to give their children over 5 alcohol in a private place it is a criminal and civil offence to cause a young person to suffer or likely to suffer harm through supplying / consuming alcohol (Children Act 1989);

1. **By Laws and police action** - In the UK some towns and cities have local by-laws banning the drinking of alcohol in public places. The police also have authority to confiscate alcohol from those under 18 who are drinking it in a public place and can arrest anyone who tries to prevent them confiscating what they believe to be alcohol.
2. **Guidance for foster carers - young people and alcohol**
* Carers should actively promote, encourage, and emphasise the advantages of, an alcohol free childhood;
* Carers should not adopt a permissive/tolerant approach to the consumption of alcohol by children and young people placed in their care;
* Carers should talk openly with young people about alcohol and give guidance, or help young people access information and guidance, about the specific harms linked to drinking at a young age, including how risks change with age and the frequency and quantity of alcohol they consume. Carers should help young people make sensible drinking decisions and understand that delaying drinking alcohol until they are aged 18, or at least until they are over 15, will reduce health risks;
* Carers are responsible for ensuring children and young people are not at risk from any alcohol kept in their home. Alcohol in a foster home should be kept out of children's reach and stored safely. Carers should monitor the alcohol in their home to ensure they are aware if any has been taken by a young person in their care without their permission;
* Carers' behaviour management strategies should include incentives for young people not to consume alcohol;
* Carers should prepare young people for an adult environment dominated by alcohol by discussing responsible drinking and the dangers associated with drinking and alcohol misuse;
* Carers should set boundaries for drinking by discussing responsible drinking and ensuring that young people are aware of the types and strengths of different alcohol and recommended adult alcohol limits;
* Carers have a critical role to play in showing children and young people how to drink responsibly. Children and young people should not witness drunkenness or binge drinking within their fostering family ;
* Carers must ensure that while caring for a foster child their parenting capacity is not impaired by alcohol;
* Carers should be aware that many children and young people in care have had negative experiences of alcohol, including violence and abuse. Carers therefore need to be sensitive to the young person's perceptions of adults drinking and how this might vary from theirs and their own children's experiences;
* Carers should talk to other parents, when children and young people are visiting or staying with friends, to ensure the rules they have in place regarding alcohol are followed;
* Carers should monitor young people's access to alcohol for example being aware how much money children have at their disposal and what they are spending it on;
* Fostered young people 16 years and older may under the supervision of their foster carer be permitted to consume one light alcoholic drink at significant family events, such as birthdays or festivities. **Only** if this is agreed as a part of the foster carers' delegated authority arrangements agreed by the young person's Social Worker and parent where appropriate. Any decision to permit the consumption of even a small amount of alcohol must have regard to the individual circumstances of the young person and should be included in the safer care document;
* Carers should seek advice from the child's social worker, dedicated children in care Nurse, Fostering Social Worker or any specialist services if they are aware, or are concerned, that the young person in their care is drinking. Clear strategies for managing the young person's alcohol consumption should be agreed and recorded in the child's Placement Plan/Health Care Plan.
1. **Sources of information and advice**

**Drinkline** tel. 0800 917 8282 (Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm) Advice and information for people with alcohol problems or anyone concerned about alcohol misuse. Provide advice on sensible drinking and information on services to help people cut down on their drinking. Leaflets and literature available.

**National Association for Children of Alcoholics** tel. 0800 358 3456 (Mon, Tue and Fri, 10am-7pm; Weds-Thurs 10am-9pm; Sat 10am-3pm) email: helpline@nacoa.org.uk [www.nacoa.org.uk](http://www.nacoa.org.uk) Helpline providing information, advice and support for children of alcoholics and those concerned for their welfare.

**Alcohol Concern** tel. 020 7935 4000 information line (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk) Works with statutory and voluntary agencies to develop and improve alcohol treatment services, increase awareness of alcohol misuse and bring about a reduction in alcohol related problems. Runs information service and produces magazine, leaflets, factsheets and other publications. Information line for people looking for information/publications on alcohol. Advice on setting up support networks.

**Adfam** tel. 020 7553 7640 (Mon–Fri, 9am-5pm) email: admin@adfam.org.uk [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk) National organisation working with families affected by drugs/alcohol. Publications and resources for families about substance use and criminal justice. Online message board and searchable database of local support groups

**Parentline Plus** tel. 0808 800 2222 (24 hours) email: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk ; [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

24-hour freephone helpline for anyone involved in caring for children. Listening, support, information and guidance on all issues of concern. Parent Together groups and workshops for parents to share ideas and learn new skills.

**Get Connected** tel. 0808 808 4994 freephone (1pm - 11pm) email: help@getconnected.org.uk ; [www.getconnected.org.uk](http://www.getconnected.org.uk) Freephone helpline for young people (under 25) which provides a free connection to local and national services and sources of help, and can text information to callers' mobile phones. Email service also available