

Alcohol in Residential Settings

RELATED CHAPTERS

This chapter must be read in conjunction with **Drugs and Substance Misuse Procedure**

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1. Introduction

Alcohol is potentially dangerous in two ways:

- Sustained drinking can lead to Health Risks and, in extreme cases, to alcohol dependence.
- Intoxication can lead to uncontrolled, disorderly or dangerous behaviour.

Since children under the age of 18 are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol, the levels of consumption, which are likely to be risk-free are lower than 21 and 14 units per week. Adolescents become intoxicated more quickly than adults, and some are more susceptible to peer group pressure, which is likely to encourage the use of alcohol.

Professional staff involved in caring for children have a particular responsibility in relation to alcohol use within a residential setting.

Alcohol should never be stored on the premises or brought into the home for any reason.

Staff should never consume alcohol while on duty or arrive for duty suffering from the effects of alcohol consumption, because:

- The consumption of alcohol, even in small quantities reduces concentration and impairs responses and may lead to unprofessional conduct and bad practice.
- The irresponsible use of alcohol will set children a bad example and would undermine any programme in place to support particular children requesting assistance to reduce alcohol use.

Children should be actively dissuaded from drinking alcohol.

Children should not be allowed to bring alcohol within the home; any alcohol found should be confiscated and disposed of.

If children are purchasing alcohol under-age, this should be reported to the police for action against suppliers.

Should children return to the unit under the influence of drink an assessment of their condition should be carried out. If it is assessed they are not in need of medical assistance then they should be monitored on a regular basis (every 20 minutes at least) to ensure their safety. Should their condition deteriorate then emergency help should be summoned.

If medical assistance is required immediately and the incident occurs out of hours then the On-Call Officer (See **Residential On Call System Guidance**) should be informed as a member of staff may need to accompany the child.

It should be recognised that if the child is violent or aggressive then emergency assistance and subsequently treatment may be refused. In these cases, assistance and advice must be sought by telephone to the Accident and Emergency Department to allow staff to offer the best treatment.

In the case of extreme violence then police help should be sought.

2. Holidays/Off Duty Situations

It will be at the discretion of the Residential Services Manager and the Senior Member of staff in charge of the holiday for any changes in the policy or exceptions.

If staff "Off-Duty" should have a drink then all procedures and guidelines stated at 1.3 – 1.5 should be noted.

If the staff on holiday are sharing the same accommodation as the children then NO alcohol should be consumed on or off-duty.