

School-based interventions on alcohol

This quick reference guide presents the recommendations on 'Interventions in schools to prevent and reduce alcohol use among children and young people'. The guidance also looks at how to link these interventions with community initiatives, including those run by children's services. It is for teachers, school governors and practitioners with health and wellbeing as part of their remit working in education, local authorities, the NHS and the wider public, voluntary and community sectors. It may also be of interest to children and young people, their families and other members of the public.

There are no national guidelines on what constitutes safe and sensible alcohol consumption for children and young people, so the recommendations focus on:

- encouraging children not to drink
- delaying the age at which young people start drinking
- reducing the harm it can cause among those who do drink.

Practitioners will need to use their professional judgement to determine the type of content needed for education programmes aimed at different groups. They will also need to judge whether or not a child or young person is drinking 'harmful amounts of alcohol'.

For the purposes of this guidance, schools include:

- state-sector, special and independent primary and secondary schools
- city technology colleges, academies and grammar schools
- pupil referral units, secure training and local authority secure units
- further education colleges.

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This guidance was developed using the NICE public health intervention process.

NICE public health guidance makes recommendations on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health. This guidance represents the views of the Institute and was arrived at after careful consideration of the evidence available. Those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public, voluntary and community sectors should take it into account when carrying out their professional, managerial or voluntary duties.

Recommendations

School-based education and advice

Recommendation 1

Who is the target population?

- Children and young people in schools.

Who should take action?

- Head teachers, teachers, school governors and others who work in (or with) schools including: school nurses, counsellors, healthy school leads, personal, social and health education (PSHE) coordinators in primary schools and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education coordinators in secondary schools.

What action should they take?

- Ensure alcohol education is an integral part of the national science, PSHE and PSHE education curricula, in line with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance.
- Ensure alcohol education is tailored for different age groups and takes different learning needs into account (based, for example, on individual, social and environmental factors). It should aim to encourage children not to drink, delay the age at which young people start drinking and reduce the harm it can cause among those who do drink. Education programmes should:
 - increase knowledge of the potential damage alcohol use can cause – physically, mentally and socially (including the legal consequences)
 - provide the opportunity to explore attitudes to – and perceptions of – alcohol use

- help develop decision-making, assertiveness, coping and verbal/non-verbal skills
- help develop self-esteem
- increase awareness of how the media, advertisements, role models and the views of parents, peers and society can influence alcohol consumption.

- Introduce a 'whole school' approach to alcohol, in line with DCSF guidance. It should involve staff, parents and pupils and cover everything from policy development and the school environment to the professional development of (and support for) staff.
- Where appropriate, offer parents or carers information about where they can get help to develop their parenting skills. (This includes problem-solving and communication skills, and advice on setting boundaries for their children and teaching them how to resist peer pressure.)

Recommendation 2

Who is the target population?

- Children and young people in schools who are thought to be drinking harmful amounts of alcohol.

Who should take action?

- Teachers, school nurses and school counsellors.

What action should they take?

- Where appropriate, offer brief, one-to-one advice on the harmful effects of alcohol use, how to reduce the risks and where to find sources of support. Offer a follow-up consultation or make a referral to external services, where necessary.
- Where appropriate, make a direct referral to external services (without providing one-to-one advice).
- Follow best practice on child protection, consent and confidentiality. Where appropriate, involve parents or carers in the consultation and any referral to external services.

Partnerships

Recommendation 3

Who is the target population?

- Children and young people in schools.

Who should take action?

- Head teachers, school governors, healthy school leads and school nurses.
- Extended school services, children's services (including the Children's Trust/children and young people's strategic partnership), primary care trusts, drug and alcohol action teams, crime disorder reduction partnerships, youth services, drug and alcohol services, the police and organisations in the voluntary and community sectors.

What action should they take?

- Maintain and develop partnerships to:
 - support alcohol education in schools as part of the national science, PSHE and PSHE education curricula
 - ensure school interventions on alcohol use are integrated with community activities introduced as part of the 'Children and young people's plan'
 - find ways to consult with families (parents or carers, children and young people) about initiatives to reduce alcohol use and to involve them in those initiatives
 - monitor and evaluate partnership working and incorporate good practice into planning.

Implementation tools

NICE has developed tools to help organisations implement this guidance. For details see our website at www.nice.org.uk/PH007

Further information

You can download the following documents from www.nice.org.uk/PH007

- A quick reference guide (this document) for practitioners and the public.
- The guidance, which includes all the recommendations, details of how they were developed and evidence statements.
- Supporting documents, including an evidence review and an economic analysis.

For printed copies of the quick reference guide, phone the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quote N1346.

Related NICE guidance

Published

- Community-based interventions to reduce substance misuse among vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. NICE public health guidance 4 (2007). Available from www.nice.org.uk/PHI004

Under development

- Promoting the mental wellbeing of children in primary education. NICE public health guidance (due March 2008).
- Mass media and point of sales measures to prevent the uptake of smoking by children and young people. NICE public health guidance (due July 2008).
- Promoting the mental wellbeing of children in secondary education. NICE public health guidance (due June 2009).
- School, college and community-based personal, social and health education, focusing on sexual health and alcohol. NICE public health guidance (due September 2009).
- Alcohol use disorders: prevention and early identification in adults and adolescents. NICE public health guidance (due 2010).
- Alcohol use disorders: management in adults and adolescents. NICE clinical guideline (due 2010).

Updating the recommendations

NICE public health guidance is updated as needed so that recommendations take into account important new information. We check for new evidence 2 and 4 years after publication, to decide whether all or part of the guidance should be updated. If important new evidence is published at other times, we may decide to update some recommendations at that time.

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