



clear

alcohol, you and your children

The issue of young people using and misusing alcohol in Lancashire is problematic, as it is in the country as a whole. 90% of the adult population drink. Many people across Lancashire drink to relax, be sociable and have a good time. The majority do so without causing harm to themselves or others. However, the misuse of alcohol can affect individuals, families and whole communities. It is important that individuals can make informed and responsible decisions about their own levels of alcohol consumption.

This guide is mainly for people with teenage children, although it can be useful when talking with younger children. This booklet will help young people and their parents to better understand the risks involved in harmful patterns of drinking."

Children Learn by Example and Adult Responsibility

CLEAR Step One: Parents should educate themselves about alcohol.

CLEAR Step Two: Parents should think about their own behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol in the home.

CLEAR Step Three: Parents should set a clear and responsible example to their children.

"As with all parenting issues, children are influenced by what they see hear & discuss at home." Parent

"Alcohol is put under your nose. It's acceptable in society. You cannot then turn round to a child and tell them not to drink. You are not going to win on that one, all you can do is educate them through it." Parent

Alcohol and religion

Lancashire has a diverse multi cultural population. Some religious beliefs prohibit the use of alcohol, whereas others accept drinking in moderation.

By drinking moderately you are acting as a positive role model to your children.

When is the best time to start talking about alcohol with your children?

There is no definite answer to this. Ideally it is best to talk about alcohol, as informally as possible, before children start to experiment by themselves or with their friends. Use the opportunities provided through media coverage, including TV, advertisements and celebrity role models, to discuss how and why alcohol is used in our society.

How do young people learn about alcohol?

Young people learn about alcohol from a wide variety of places. Research, which took place in Lancashire, showed the following to be the most useful sources of information for young people:

- Parents
- School
- Friends
- Media.

It is therefore essential that as parents, you can answer your children's questions as accurately as you can.

Alcohol is often linked with popularity, looking good and having a great time. For the majority of the population, alcohol leads to no harm. However, for some, the reality can be quite different and may range from waking up with a bad hangover to more serious consequences.

Supporting my teenager

Try and work out some ground rules together, which could include knowing where your children are and who they are with.

"If your child is 15-17 they probably spend a lot of time with friends and going out. Some teenagers of this age are beginning to drink on a regular basis. And at this age they're highly influenced by young adults, the age group most likely to binge drink. So make sure you know where they are and who they are with. Be clear that you're still in charge – but only because you care about their safety, health and future." **Drinkaware Trust**

- Do you know how much alcohol you have in your house? Are your children regularly helping themselves?
- Do you know what your teenager is spending their money on? Alcohol is cheaply available well within most young peoples price range!
- Do you know what they are doing, who they are with, where they are hanging out?
- Are you sure they are safe?
- Have they got other interests, such as sport, dancing, music or youth clubs. Are there activities you can get involved in as a family".

'North West average weekly pocket money in 2007 was £9.73, a North west 12-16 year old could buy 57 units of alcohol per week with this amount' (Liverpool JMU Centre for Public Health)



Safety tips

It is important to make sure that your teenager knows how to keep safe if they have been drinking. They need to know how to get help if needed and how to get home safely.

You might consider discussing some of the following points with your teenager if they do choose to drink:

- Eat something before they drink alcohol – drinking on an empty stomach means that the body absorbs alcohol very quickly, food will slow this down. **However it will not prevent them from getting drunk.**
- Alternate an alcoholic drink with a soft drink or water. This will help reduce the amount of alcohol consumed and reduce dehydration.
- Mixing different types of alcohol will worsen the hangover.
- Never leave a drink unattended.
- Mixing alcohol with any kind of drug can be extremely dangerous.
- Leave enough money for a bus or taxi fare home. Relying on a friend, who may also have been drinking, should not be an option.
- Always travel home in groups – don't leave anyone on their own to walk home.
- If a friend becomes ill, very drowsy or unconscious, get adult help. Don't be afraid of calling 999 if you need to.

What do i do if they come home drunk?

Don't panic. Don't over react this may cause more trouble – and anyway you will not get a sensible response. It may be better to wait until the next day when you have calmed down and they have sobered up.

First Aid

If your child seems seriously ill or is very drowsy or unconscious, you need expert help at once:

Call 999.

It is important not to panic. Tell the emergency services clearly what symptoms your child has and what alcohol or drugs they've had, if you know.

Vital steps to recovery:

- Don't delay
 - Don't leave them on their own
 - If the child is unconscious, lie them face upwards on the floor and check airway and circulation (below).
- **If they are breathing:**
 - Place or help them into the recovery position (see below)
 - Call 999 for an ambulance, or get someone else to do it if possible, and stay where you are with the child.
 - Keep them warm.

Airway

Open airway by tilting head back and lifting chin.

The Recovery Position

Place your hand against their cheek, pull on the leg to roll the child towards you on to their side, and adjust upper leg so that hip and knee are at right angles.

Circulation

Look, listen and feel for signs such as breathing, coughing or movement.

Facts about alcohol

(Department of Health survey, binge drinking)

CLEAR FACT: "In 2006, 2,239 under 14's were taken to casualty suffering the effects of drinking too much." **Office of National Statistics**

CLEAR FACT: "By the age of 13 more teenagers drink than don't." **Alcohol Concern**

As many as one in 10 children drink alcohol in their final year of primary school figures show under-age girls were more likely to get drunk than boys.

How often do they drink?

Almost a third of 15-16 year olds binge drink (drink more than 5 units in one session) and get drunk at least three times a month.

Why do young people drink?

Quotes from young people

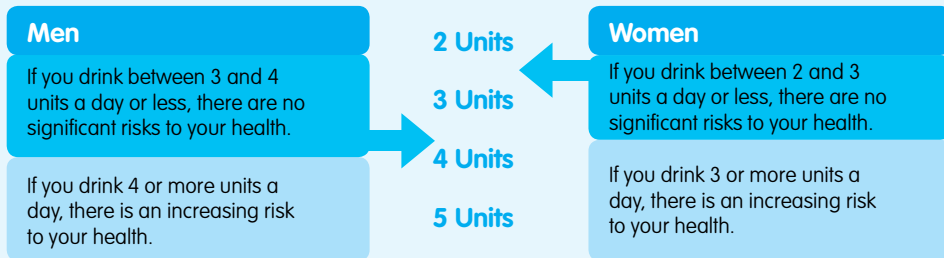
"There is nothing to do except get drunk and have fun..."

"We drink in a large group on the park, it's a good atmosphere and safe as there's a large number of us. There is never a lot of trouble but we act like hooligans, run around and dance to music, we don't cause any damage. We just want to act childish, you have an excuse when you are drunk, you don't care how you behave."

"First started drinking when I was 9 or 10 started on alcopops 'cos of the sweet nice taste."

Units of alcohol – recommended daily guidelines

Adults are advised by the Department of Health to drink no more than 2 to 3 units per day if you are a woman, or 3 to 4 units per day if you're a man. These are guidelines only, you can't 'save up units' for the weekend – that is classified as 'binge drinking' and drinking a lot in one go, can be very risky. It is also advisable to have 2 to 3 alcohol free days per week to allow the liver to recover.



Description of units

Under 18's should drink well below these amounts, and there is currently no known 'safe' amount for younger children (however new government guidelines are due out in 2008). Remember that the way alcohol reacts in young peoples bodies depends on physical size and stage of development. It is important that they know about the different strengths of drinks for example a single shot of whisky is 1 unit whilst a bottle of alcopops is 1.5 units!

Pregnancy

The Government advises that pregnant women or women trying to conceive should avoid drinking alcohol. If they do choose to drink, to protect the baby they should not drink more than 1-2 units of alcohol once or twice a week and should not get drunk. Too much exposure to alcohol can affect a baby's development and put them at risk of developing Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Alcoholic Drink	ABV	Units	Approx Calories
Pint of premium lager	5%	2.8	265
Pint of normal cider	5%	2.1	119
Glass of red wine	12%	2.1	130
Glass of white wine (med)	12%	1.4	228
Alchopop 275ml bottle	5%	2.8	210
Vodka and coke 35ml shot	40%	1.4	120

Health effects of alcohol – short term, long term

Many young people who do drink regularly think it isn't really doing them any harm and aren't aware of the risks involved and the health problems they may be storing up for later in life.

Short term effects:

- Dehydration.
- Slows reactions.
- Affects judgement.
- Loss of co-ordination.
- Drunkenness.
- Hospital admissions for alcohol poisoning, facial injuries, accidents, assaults.
- Alcohol mixed with other drugs can be extremely dangerous.

Long term effects:

- Liver cirrhosis.
- Loss of bone density.
- Brain damage.
- Lowering of hormone production.
- Stomach disorders.
- Death – this is, fortunately, very rare.

Other Risks for Young People may include

- Regretted sex.
- Walking home alone.
- Dangerous driving.
- Trouble with the police.
- Becomes a victim of crime.
- School exclusion.
- Poor school performance.

Alcohol and the law

It is against the law to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18. Young people often find someone to buy alcohol on their behalf, this is called 'proxy sales'. Young people may approach parents, friends, siblings and even complete strangers, outside shop premises.

CLEAR FACT: A 2007 survey found that parents in Lancashire have the 2nd highest rate amongst the 21 North West authorities for buying alcohol for their teenagers.

"If I was going out to the park I would tell my mum to get me some drink"
(Female aged 14)

"I get somebody else to buy alcohol for me...ask people outside shops to go in and get my drink .. usually get someone to agree" (Female aged 14)

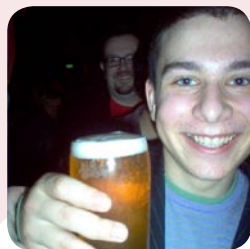


The consequences

Buying alcohol for someone under the age of 18 is against the law:

- Its illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18
- Its illegal for an under 18 year old to ask someone over 18 to buy alcohol
- Its illegal to buy alcohol for someone under 18 years of age.

"Someone could be buying alcohol that your child could drink unsupervised in risky surroundings"



Local Agencies that can support young people and parents

There are lots of organisations that young people can go to if they feel worried and need someone to talk to. These are some that are local to the Lancashire area.

Connexions Direct

Tel: 080800 13 2 19
www.connexions-direct.com
www.cx-lancs.co.uk

Young Addaction North Lancashire

Covers; Lancaster, Morecambe, Fylde and Wyre, Morecambe One Stop Shop
6-8 Kensington Road
Morecambe, LA4 5LX
Tel: 07789397932
www.addaction.org.uk

YoungAddaction South Lancashire

Covers; Preston, Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire,
Urban Exchange, Mount St
Preston, PR1 8BQ
Tel: 01772 255307

Early Break

East Lancashire; Burnley, Nelson, Hynburn, Ribble Valley, Pendle
St Phillips Grassroots Centre
Leeds Road, Nelson, BB99XB
Tel: 01282 604022
www.earlybreak.co.uk

Urban Exchange

Advice centre for 11-25 year olds in the Preston area.
Mount Street off Fishergate, Preston PR1 8BQ
Open Monday to Saturday
Tel: 01772 255300
www.urbanexchange.org.uk

What Now

Information shop with signposting to local services.
Tel: 01524 825 155
Email: enquiries@whatnow.co.uk
www.whatnow.co.uk

The Line

Freephone number available daily from 10am-10pm
Tel: 0800 511 111
www.q2a.co.uk

National support agencies

Alcohol Concern

www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
Tel: 0800 917 8282

Drinkline

Tel: 0800 917 8282
Monday to Thursday, 9.00 to 23.00;

Frank

Tel: 0800 77 66 00
Email: frank@talktofrank.com
www.talktofrank.com

Drinkaware

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Parentline Plus

Parentline: 0808 800 2222
Textphone: 0800 783 6783
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

