



Alcohol Teacher Support Sheet

Core message

It's illegal for someone under 18 to buy or be sold alcohol. The aim is to help young people to make informed, safe decisions and delay drinking, rather than promoting abstinence.

The law

- It is illegal for someone under 18 to buy or be sold alcohol.
 - It is not illegal for a child aged 5 to 16 to drink alcohol at home or on other private premises.
 - It is not illegal for someone aged 16 or 17 to drink beer, wine or cider at a meal if accompanied by an adult.
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Information

- In England, only 4% of people aged 11–15 drink at least weekly (down from 20% in 2003) – i.e. 96% don't drink weekly (<1% of 11-year-olds drink rising to 13% of 15-year-olds).¹
- 62% of people aged 11–15 have never drunk alcohol (up from 40% in 2000). The proportion of pupils who have had an alcoholic drink increases from 8% of 11-year-olds to 69% of 15-year-olds.¹
- The proportion of pupils who think it is ok for someone of their age to drink alcohol has fallen in recent years. In 2013, 24% of pupils thought that it was ok for someone their age to drink once a week, compared to 46% in 2003.¹
- Despite recent declines, the proportion of children in the UK drinking alcohol remains well above the European average. We continue to rank among the countries with the highest levels of consumption among those who do drink, and British children are more likely to binge drink or get drunk compared to children in most other European countries.²
- Data from the *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use* survey indicates that girls are drinking more from an earlier age and experiencing more harm than boys.¹
- Misuse of alcohol by young people, as opposed to the general population, is recognised nationally as a serious problem. The amount of alcohol young people, on average, report drinking has shown an increase in their weekly units, and young people tend to consume the units they drink over a fewer number of days than adults.
- The impact on the health and well-being of young people who abuse alcohol includes: engaging in risky sexual behaviour, mental health problems, involvement in crime, and poorer school performance and attendance. A clear link can also be made between alcohol consumption and teenage conception.*

(*Based on research in electoral wards with the highest levels of alcohol-related hospital admissions, the rate of conception for girls aged 15–17 was higher than in other wards with lowest levels of alcohol related hospital admissions).

Signposting

Students are encouraged to speak to family, friends, a healthcare professional, school nurses or a member of staff in their school if they require support and/or guidance with issues associated with alcohol. For further information please visit [Talk to Frank](#) and the [NHS 'Live well' website](#).

¹ HSCIC Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England 2014 report, published 2015.

² Hibell B, Guttormson U, Ahlstrom S, et al (2012) The 2011 ESPAD report: substance use among students in 36 European countries.