



# Use of Alcohol in Children and Young People

## What is the Background?

Recent research into underage drinking in the UK found that approximately 10% of children aged 11-15 who were surveyed, had drunk alcohol in the last week, consuming an average of 5 units. Beginning to drink at a young age is associated with increased health risks, including alcohol-related injuries, involvement in violence, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Drinking at an early age increases the risk of experiencing harm or abuse, educational difficulties and poorer outcomes in adulthood.

## Where Can I Get Information?

- [Warwickshire COMPASS](#) provide information, advice and support for practitioners, children and young people and their parents and carers
- [West Midlands Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)
- [Warwickshire Children's Services Neglect Toolkit](#)
- [Child Neglect 7MB](#)

## What is the Local Context?

Findings from a Child Safeguarding Practice Review in Warwickshire identified that excessive drinking by teenagers aged 11 to 14 may not always be considered as an indicator of vulnerability, which means that signs of adverse childhood experiences may be being missed leading to some children not getting support they need

## What Should I Consider?

Do not dismiss the behaviour as a normal part of growing up. Speak to the child alone to try and understand the cause of the behaviours. Consider the history of the family and the impact this may be having. Be curious, where/ who is the alcohol coming from and how can the child afford the alcohol. Consider if there is a risk of child criminal or sexual exploitation

## Why is it Important?

Children who regularly use alcohol are at greater risk and vulnerability of both immediate and long-term adverse outcomes; including accidents and injuries, a range of health issues, including weight loss, disturbed sleep and headaches. Evidence also suggests they are more likely to underperform at school

## What are the Links with Neglect?

Children and young people who experience neglect are more likely to drink alcohol in a variety of situations and are more likely to develop 'Alcohol Use Disorders'. They are also / therefore more likely to:

- Have an increased risk of harm or abuse
- be exploited
- go missing from home and/or school

## Isn't Experimenting Normal?

It is very easy to minimise and normalise childhood alcohol use as a normal part of growing up; however, this should be avoided. The use of alcohol at a young age is likely to have more deep-rooted causes and can often be linked to adverse childhood experiences and neglect. These children are at greater risk of criminal and sexual exploitation, at risk of exploitation by organised criminal networks, and county lines