

## 1 Introduction

There's strong evidence that drinking alcohol at a young age can lead to health problems, increased risky behaviour, and impaired development and performance at school. The campaign hopes to help de-normalise alcohol in families and communities so young people can have the best start in life.

## 2 CMO Guidelines

The advice from England's Chief Medical Officer is that "Children and their parents and carers are advised that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option. However, if children drink alcohol it should not be until at least the age of 15 years".

*No alcohol before 18 is safest; and certainly not before 15*

*Alcohol is the leading risk factor for death amongst 15-49 year olds in the UK.*

## 3 The risks

Alcohol is linked to 200 different diseases and injuries, including heart disease, liver disease and seven types of cancer. The risks to under 18s are even greater than the harms to adults.

Evidence suggests that alcohol is linked to:

- Physical and mental development
- Mental health conditions
- Falling behind at school
- Future heavy drinking
- Risky behaviour taking

## 4 Principles of AFC

Free from the impact of other people's drinking.

Free from commercial, social and environmental pressure to drink.

Free from health and social harms caused by drinking alcohol themselves.

Supported and encouraged to make healthy, positive lifestyle choices.

## 7 Further Information

- SORTED Young Peoples' Drug & Alcohol Services, Northumbria House, Cramlington, NE23 6UR. Tel: 01670 536400

- Escape Family Support: 01670 544055  
24/7 helpline: 07702833944

*Some parents/carers have been considering their own drinking patterns as a result of this campaign and may need additional support from specialist services. Please refer to the AUDIT questionnaire for adults.*

*Northumberland Recovery Partnership: 01670 396 303*

## 6 Campaign resources

Posters are available to display in public facing areas.

Balance have created resources for parents and carers to support conversations with young people about alcohol. These are available to download and print from

[www.whatstheharm.co.uk](http://www.whatstheharm.co.uk)

Advice and real life stories are also available on this website, aimed at parents/carers.

## 5 Beliefs

There are many myths and incorrect beliefs amongst young people and their parents or carers. The AFC campaign attempts to bust these myths and uncover the truth about alcohol.

For example:

- Most young people drink.
- Giving alcohol younger prevents binge drinking.
- Drinking alcohol at home means they won't drink elsewhere.
- Alcopops are ok, they're weaker than beer and spirits.

# Alcohol Free Childhood

