

Section 1: Probation Service's role

2. Alcohol and probation

2.1. What you need to know

The main responsibility of the probation service is to reduce re-offending and protect the public. Alcohol is a problem for a large number of offenders. It is often linked to crime. This is particularly true of violent offences, including domestic violence.

The probation service works with offenders in looking at their drinking and how to reduce alcohol related offending.

In the past you may have been offered help to address alcohol issues. This may have been at the Police station, while on bail, at the hospital or at your GP before you came into contact with probation. You may have already started to receive help for your drinking.

This may be the first time alcohol has been mentioned by your offender manager. You may have been convicted of an offence(s) and are waiting before being sentenced by the court.

Your offender manager will have already asked you many questions in order to prepare a pre-sentence report (PSR) for the court. These will have included questions on alcohol use. If your answers suggest that you have an alcohol problem then you will be asked some more questions. These extra questions are usually called alcohol screening.

The alcohol screening may be carried out by your offender manager or by a member of a treatment service. You will be asked from 1 to 10 questions about your drinking and will be scored on the answers you give. This will help to decide the type of help you need and how quickly you need it. An example of an alcohol screening tool (AUDIT) is contained within this pack.

2.2. Brief information, advice and support

If you have a less serious problem then you should be given some information, advice and support about how to control your drinking. This could be in one 5 minute session straight after the screening. Or there could be

several repeat sessions (usually max. of 10) of about 30 minutes which may form part of your sentence. This will be delivered by your offender manager or by a member of staff from a local alcohol service.

2.3. Specialised and intensive treatment

If it seems that you have a serious alcohol problem needing medical treatment, you will be seen by someone from an alcohol treatment service. They will give you a fuller assessment to find out how serious your problems are and decide the treatment that you need. You may have to wait a while before you can be assessed and start in treatment. This is because there is a high demand for treatment and limited places. While you wait your offender manager will do other work with you to look at your alcohol use and offending.

The information obtained from these assessments will help the courts decide the type and length of sentence you will be given. It will also help your offender manager to produce a sentence plan of the work that will be done with you after the court has passed its sentence on you.

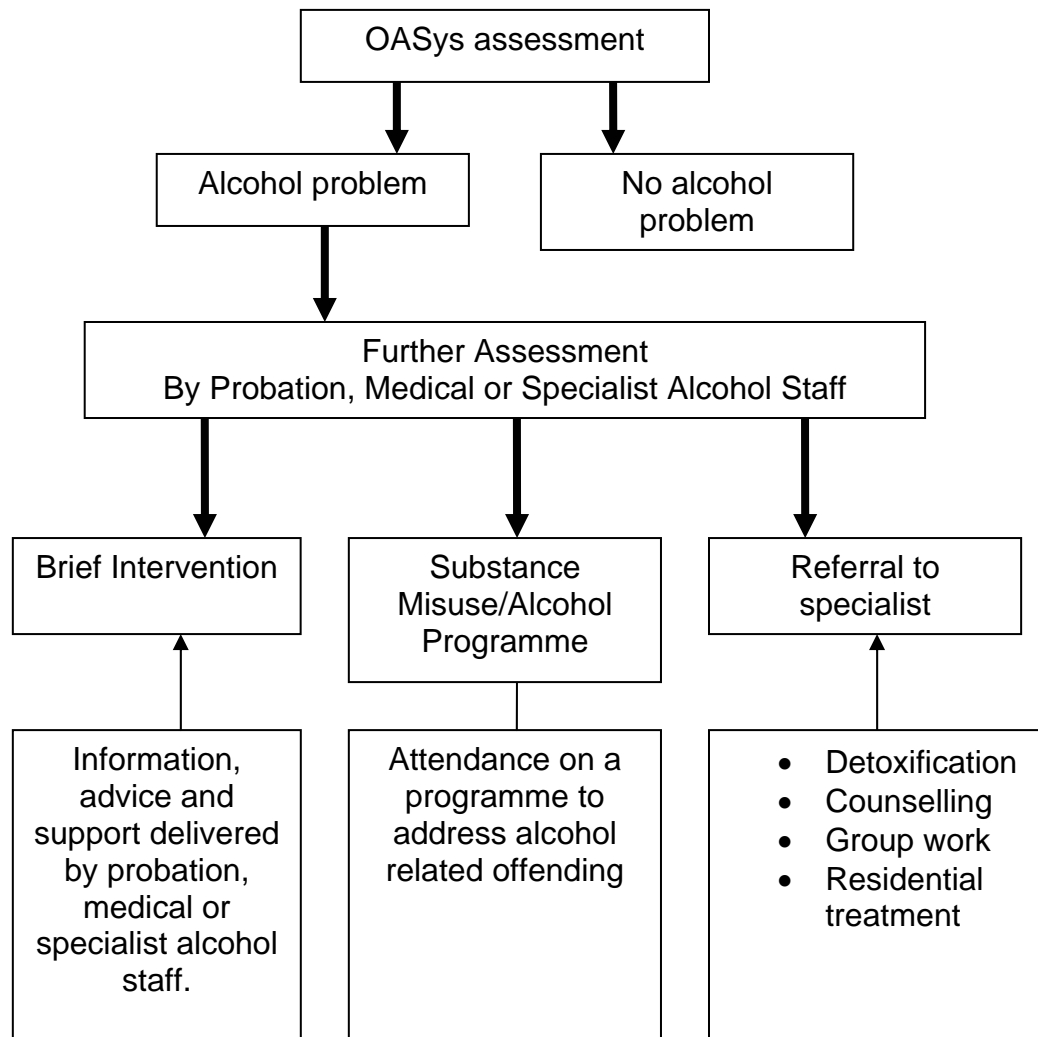
2.4. Aftercare

Advice will also be given to you by your offender manager on further treatment and support available to you once your sentence has ended. For example, going to your local alcohol service or local advice centre or attending a self-help group such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

2.5. Alcohol testing

Your offender manager or treatment provider may wish to test you for alcohol use to see how well you are doing in treatment. You can only be tested if you agree.

Your progress through probation



3. Alcohol interventions while on probation

3.1. Introduction

Everyone is different and depending on your situation, the probation service will try to offer you the help you need. This may be just a conversation with your offender manager to ensure you are aware of the facts around alcohol and the dangers, to some counselling or more formal treatment from an outside agency to help you address any problems alcohol may be causing you.

The help you receive while under probation supervision will depend upon:

- The nature and extent of your alcohol problems
- What help is available locally
- The type and length of sentence you have been given by the court

The main requirements of a community order (CO) or suspended sentence order (SSO) through which you may be given help to address your alcohol problem are:

- Alcohol treatment requirement (ATR)
- Supervision or activity requirement through which you may receive information, advice and support
- Programme requirement for you to attend a substance misuse/alcohol or other programme to address your alcohol related offending

3.2. Alcohol treatment requirement (ATR)

The ATR is for those offenders who have a serious alcohol problem and require intensive, specialist treatment. This might be:

- Counselling or therapy work
- Structured day care
- Detoxification (“detox”)
- Residential rehabilitation

(See chapter 17 *Getting help - treatment* for more information)

The court will specify where this treatment will be carried out. The court can only make an ATR if you agree to have treatment and a place is available for you.

The ATR can last for between six months and three years. You or your supervising officer can apply for the ATR to be revoked early for good progress i.e. for doing well in supervision or treatment.

Most offenders with alcohol problems under probation supervision will not need an ATR.

3.3. Brief interventions

The court may decide that you have less serious alcohol problems, but that you require some advice, information and support to help you think about your drinking. This will help you work out ways to drink sensibly without some of the nasty consequences. The information will help you reduce the risks to your health. This will be given to you by non-specialist medical staff or suitably trained probation staff (see 2.2 for more information).

3.4. Substance misuse programmes

Your problems with alcohol may not need medical treatment. It may be that the way you use alcohol can be helped through one of the following programmes:

- Addressing Substance Related Offending (ASRO)
- Offender Substance Abuse Programme (OSAP)
- Drink Impaired Drivers (DID)

The programme you do will aim to teach you how to think or behave differently and stay out of trouble. The programme you do might include looking at how you handle problems, how you deal with other people, and how you behave in difficult situations. You may have to attend the programme in a group with other offenders or attend on your own.

3.5. Lower Intensity Alcohol Programme (LIAP)

This is currently available in 8 probation areas (Bedfordshire, Devon and Cornwall, Leicestershire & Rutland, Lincolnshire, London, North Wales, North Yorkshire, West Midlands) where it is being piloted.

LIAP is aimed at those whose:

- Alcohol misuse and offending needs are not enough for one of the substance misuse programmes
- Main need is for another programme e.g. violence but where there is still a need for alcohol related offending to be dealt with

If piloting goes well, LIAP will be made available for use in other probation areas in the future.

3.6. Alcohol related licence condition

If you have been released from prison and you are subject to probation supervision, there may be a condition in your licence that you address your alcohol problems. This condition builds upon any treatment that you have received in custody and supports help given to you after you leave prison. The licence condition may require you to have further advice and support or attend an offending behaviour programme but cannot make you attend medical treatment. Your offender manager will only refer you into medical treatment at this point in your sentence with your agreement and if there is a place available for you.