



ALCOHOL INFORMATION PACK FOR OFFENDERS UNDER PROBATION SUPERVISION: Offender Managers Guide

Interventions & Substance Abuse Unit
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Alcohol Concern
Making Sense of Alcohol

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1. How to use the Alcohol Information Pack

1.1. Purpose of the pack

Most adults and many young people in the UK drink alcohol. Many drink every day, often at levels that may eventually damage their health; or large amounts on occasion that increase their risk of accidents, violence or other criminal activity.

Alcohol is a significant contributing factor in offending. Some individuals will recognise this; others will not have thought about it at all. Offender managers are well placed to identify and address alcohol as an issue with offenders who are: awaiting sentence (at the pre-sentence report stage); serving a community or custodial sentence; or released from prison under post supervision licence. The alcohol information pack describes addressing alcohol misuse at three levels based around the 4 tiered framework of the National Treatment Agency's *Models of care for alcohol misusers* (MoCAM)¹:

- Primary prevention (Tier 1 of MoCAM): alerting people to the risks of drinking too much by offering clear and consistent information
- Brief interventions (Tier 2 of MoCAM): addressing high-risk and harmful drinking levels
- Intensive treatment (Tiers 3 and 4 of MoCAM): signposting and supporting those offenders needing specialist treatment

The purpose of this pack is to provide offender managers with clear guidance and tools to:

- Identify offenders with alcohol related needs
- Deliver what are commonly described as 'brief interventions' to offenders who require interventions in Tiers 1 or 2 of MoCAM

¹ *Models of care for alcohol misusers* (MoCAM) provides best practice guidance in delivering a planned and integrated local treatment system for adult alcohol misusers.

- Offer support and onward referral to those who may need more intensive intervention at Tiers 3 or 4 of MoCAM

The pack can be used with low risk drinkers and with higher risk drinkers – both abstainers and those who want to change their behaviour. The pack is intended for use with a ‘motivational interviewing’ approach.

1.2. The offender manager’s role

Some professionals fight shy of alcohol problems because of:

- Lack of time
- A belief that their training is inadequate
- Fear of antagonising the individual
- A belief that individuals will not respond to brief interventions

These are misconceptions and this pack provides a framework around which offender managers can deliver a better service to offenders. Screening for alcohol problems, using the Offender Assessment System (OASys) and a validated alcohol screening tool, such as the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), is quick. So are brief interventions. Both require minimal training. There is significant evidence that early detection and intervention is effective in reducing alcohol-related harm.

The aim with this pack is not to be prescriptive. Offender managers are best placed to understand the needs of individual offenders. The suggestions on how to use this pack are just that – suggestions. The pack is directed at offenders but it is for offender managers to decide how to use it. Literacy will be an issue for some offenders.

1.3. Screening for alcohol problems

Screening is the first step in addressing alcohol as an issue. This should be undertaken *at least* for offenders where alcohol is an existing issue e.g. after an alcohol problem has been identified by section 9 of OASys. Screening

identifies those whose drinking may pose a risk to their health as well as those who are already experiencing alcohol-related problems.

Screening can provide information to inform a pre-sentence report recommendation, develop a sentence plan, and give offenders personal feedback that can be used to motivate them to change their drinking.

Screening should be done systematically with a standardised, validated screening instrument. Ideally, this should be integrated within a screening and assessment process as recommended by MoCAM. The pack does not prescribe a specific tool but it contains a version of the AUDIT, developed by the World Health Organisation. AUDIT has the advantages of being:

- Short, easy to use, and flexible
- Validated in many countries and available in many languages

This can be found at 16.3 of the pack.

AUDIT consists of ten questions which:

- Measure the quantity and frequency of alcohol use
- Ask about the occurrence of possible drinking problems
- Enquire about lifestyle problems associated with alcohol use

It should take no more than five minutes to complete, though it does require an explanation of what a unit of alcohol is (see 5.2 of the pack). There are four levels of classification within AUDIT (low risk, risky, harmful or very harmful – see 16.4 of the pack). Higher AUDIT scores generally indicate greater risk to health. The guidelines in 16.4 of the pack can serve as a starting point but will need to be considered alongside other factors, such as the seriousness of offence and risk of re-offending, when determining the most appropriate intervention for the individual offender.

1.4. Brief interventions

What is a 'brief intervention'?

This pack is about more than just telling people things. Brief interventions aim to identify a real or potential alcohol problem and to motivate the person to do something about it (ideally at an early opportunity).

Brief interventions have become increasingly valuable in the management of people with alcohol-related problems as they are cheap and effective with a range of people in a variety of settings. Health and social care providers use them to boost primary prevention and to bridge the gap between basic information giving and intensive treatment. The Department of Health's *Review of the effectiveness of treatment for alcohol problems* found, 'brief interventions, of various forms and in a variety of settings, are effective in reducing alcohol consumption among hazardous and harmful drinkers to low-risk levels.'

Advice in this pack can be used to deliver a simple brief intervention (about 5 minutes) immediately after screening at the pre-sentence report stage to those identified as having a relatively low-level drink problem. However, the pack is primarily for use with those risky/hazardous and harmful drinkers² identified as needing extended brief interventions (typically 3-12 sessions of 20-30 minutes each) delivered, as part of a sentence plan, most commonly through a supervision or activity requirement.³ Offenders released from custody subject to a licence condition to address their alcohol problem may also benefit from working through chapters, as a follow-up to interventions received in prison.

² The World Health Organisation's tenth revision of the *International classification of diseases* (ICD-10) defines:-

hazardous use of a psychoactive substance, such as alcohol, as an "occasional, repeated or persistent pattern of use...which carries with it a high risk of causing future damage to the medical or mental health of the user but which has not yet resulted in significant medical or psychological ill effects"; and

harmful use of a psychoactive substance, such as alcohol, as "a pattern of use which is already causing damage to health. The damage may be physical or mental."

³ The tier of the Offender Management Model (OMM) within which the offender is being managed must be taken into consideration.

It is important to note that this pack is certainly not intended to provide clinically-defined 'problem' drinkers with treatment required under an alcohol treatment requirement (ATR). However, it can be used with offenders on ATRs who are waiting to access clinical treatment; to supplement such treatment; and/or for relapse prevention work.

1.5. Tools for offender managers to use

The pack consists of 18 chapters, which have been divided into five sections and an introduction:

Section 1: The probation service's role

Chapter 2 – *Alcohol and probation*

Chapter 3 – *Alcohol interventions while on probation*

Section 2: General alcohol information

In chapters 4 to 10 the focus is on providing straightforward, clear and consistent information on a range of subjects.

Chapter 4 – *Alcohol and you*

Chapter 5 – *The amount of alcohol you are drinking*

Chapter 6 – *Alcohol and your body*

Chapter 7 – *Alcohol in our lives*

Chapter 8 – *Alcohol and methadone*

Chapter 9 – *Alcohol and other drugs*

Chapter 10 – *Is my drinking a problem?*

Section 3: Specific offender groups and issues

Chapters 11 to 15 give information for specific groups.

Chapter 11 – *Women and alcohol*

Chapter 12 – *Young people and drinking*

Chapter 13 – *When problem drinking affects your family*

Chapter 14 – *Alcohol and black and minority ethnic communities*

Chapter 15 – *Alcohol and mental health*

Section 4: Motivational Interventions

Chapter 16 – *Things to do: self help*

In chapter 16, there is a range of exercises and activities to work through with the offender. In particular, offenders identified as risky/hazardous or harmful drinkers or potentially higher risk drinkers need:

- Feedback that they are putting themselves at risk
- An opportunity to talk about their drinking and decide whether they want to change
- Help to set lower-risk drinking goals and develop strategies for change

We suggest:

All drinkers and low risk drinkers

- How much do you really know? - An alcohol quiz (16.2)
- The AUDIT screening tool (16.3)
- Your reasons for drinking (16.5)
- Keeping a drink diary (16.7).
- How alcohol affects your life (16.8)
- Looking at how your drinking affects others (16.9)
- Tips for cutting down (16.10)

Higher risk drinkers or problem drinkers contemplating change

These groups can do a number of the exercises above but can also focus on:

- Looking to change your drinking style (16.11)
- Thinking about alternatives (16.12)

Problem drinkers and problem drinkers who are abstinent

They can use the previous exercises but also:

- Cravings and urges (16.13)
- Understanding your urges (16.14)
- Urge log (16.15)
- Coping strategies (16.16)
- Coping strategy checklist (16.17)

- Triggers (16.18)
- Dealing with high risk situations (16.19)
- Role play (16.20)
- Going back to previous ways of behaving (16.21)
- Techniques for coping with mental health issues (16.22)

All the exercises and activities have a self-help focus and should not be seen as a replacement for more intensive treatment or intervention.

Section 5: Routes into treatment

The final chapters focus on treatment:

Chapter 17 - Getting help: treatment

This chapter provides information about more intensive interventions such as a specialist alcohol service or detoxification. There is also information for any individuals who may be doing something about their problem drinking alone without accessing services.

Chapter 18 - Contact numbers (support services)

This chapter provides a generic list of advice and information, both alcohol and mental health related links, that individuals can contact to investigate further the possible service providers in their local area. These are national level links to complement existing local access referral points.

1.6. What do I do now?

Have a look at the pack and briefly review its contents. See what sections and what chapters would be of most use to you.

The only hard and fast recommendation is that this large document is not put straight in front of offenders with the expectation they read it all, word by word.