



## **Fostering Service Policy**

### **Guidance on Alcohol Consumption**

The information contained in this document should be fully discussed with all prospective and approved Foster Carers.

Foster Carers need to understand that alcohol reduces concentration and impairs responses; this may lead to unprofessional conduct. Foster Carers have a responsibility to model the sensible use of alcohol to children and young people that they are caring for.

#### **Alcohol Consumption**

Alcohol misuse means drinking excessively – this means drinking more than the recommended limit of alcohol.

Guidance provided by the Department of Health in 2016 advises;

To keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level you are safest not regularly drinking more than 14 units per week – 14 units is equivalent to a bottle and a half of wine or five pints of export-type lager (5% abv) over the course of the week – this applies to both men and women.

If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over three days or more.

If you have one or two heavy drinking sessions, you increase your risks of death from long-term illnesses and from accidents and injuries.

The risk of developing a range of illness (including, for example, cancers of mouth, throat and breast) increases with any amount you drink on a regular basis.

If you wish to cut down the amount you're drinking, a good way to achieve this is to have several alcohol-free days each week. 'Regularly' means drinking this amount every day or most days of the week.

It is also recommended that both men and women should have at least two alcohol free days each week. Your health is at risk if you regularly exceed recommended daily limits.

#### **Milton Keynes Council Policy**

Foster Carers have a responsibility for the children they look after. MKC recommends that while looking after children, carers should have no more than two units of alcohol. Carers always need to be aware that at least one carer has to be alert to the possibility of an emergency with a child.

MKC also recommends that carers should not drink any alcohol if they need to drive CLA anywhere. If an emergency arises and the child needs to be taken somewhere and the carer has had a drink then the carer should find somebody else to drive them or order a taxi.

It is not at all appropriate for children to see their carers drunk due to the negative messages such behaviour is likely to model to the children.

## **Alcohol and Pregnancy**

If you are pregnant or trying to conceive you should avoid alcohol.

## **Getting help**

If carers are concerned about theirs or somebody else's drinking a good first step is to contact the GP. They will be able to advise on services and treatments that are available.

The Fostering Service would want to deal sympathetically with carers who feel they may have an alcohol problem. We would want to offer any advice that may be appropriate.

There are a number of charities and support groups across the UK.

For example:

Alcoholics Anonymous Helpline – 08457697555

Alcohol Concern Helpline (Drinkline) – 03001231100

## **Children and Young People**

Foster Carers should be aware that children and young people may have experienced trauma and abuse associated with alcohol consumption or have existing patterns of alcohol abuse themselves. It is therefore vital that carers have full background information about each foster child and are sensitive to the child/young person's perceptions of adult drinking patterns and behaviour.

Foster Carers have a responsibility to promote the health and well-being of children in their care. Any issues regarding a young person and alcohol should be discussed with their Social Worker and the carers supervising Social Worker. All parties should be clear about what strategies to adopt in managing any particular behaviour relating to alcohol.

It is never appropriate to provide a foster child with alcohol.

## **By-Laws and Police Action**

In the UK some towns and cities have local by-laws banning the drinking of alcohol in public places. The police also have authority to confiscate alcohol from those under 18 years of age who are drinking in a public place and can arrest anyone who tries to prevent them confiscating what they believe to be alcohol.

The NHS website can offer further information in relation to alcohol consumption.