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## Alcohol and Scouting

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### Alcohol in particular raises a number of issues, both for young people and for adult leaders

The guidance below deals with the questions that alcohol might raise in a Scouting environment.

#### Introduction

Alcohol is a part of many people's lives, regardless of whether they consume it. The issues alcohol has on health. Drinking alcohol can have associated hazards. The level of risk depends on who the situation.

Drinking any amount of alcohol has effects on the physical co-ordination of the body and can slow reaction time. Within minutes of being consumed, alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream and causes immediate impairment of brain function. It takes an hour for the adult body to process one unit of alcohol.

Young people find out about alcohol by trying it themselves, observing others and through information from the media, through advertising, etc. As an adult in Scouting, you are a role model for young people and will inevitably be influenced by those adults they respect. Drinking alcohol may not mean an adult is irresponsible. However, in certain circumstances doing so has the potential to place adults in a compromising position in terms of their responsibilities for child protection and their duty of care.

#### The Scout Association's Safety Policy

The Scout Association has a key policy, which requires Scouting to be provided in a safe manner that is reasonably practicable. All adults need to be physically and mentally fit to undertake their responsibilities for young people, adults must not drink alcohol.

#### Policy Organisation and Rules 2.4 d

'During 'off duty' periods, adults in Scouting also need to take into account the effects alcohol has on their fitness to fulfil their Scouting duties.'

'Under no circumstances should young people under the age of 18 be allowed to consume alcohol.'

#### Good Practice

During Scouting events that are attended by under-18s, the following should apply:

- Under 18s must not consume alcohol under any circumstances.
- At any one time there should be the correct ratio of responsible adults who must not consume alcohol and risk assessments in place depending on the size and nature of the event.
- Adults must not consume alcohol in the presence of under-18s.
- Where adults do consume alcohol it should be in an area separate from young people and that only areas to which young people do not have access.

- Adults who do consume alcohol should be mindful of the need to follow the Yellow Card ('You are directly responsible for young people).
- Consideration should be given to the effects alcohol can have and how it may affect an individual's duties. This should form part of the risk assessment (for example, if someone drinks excess alcohol before performing duties the following morning).
- Consideration should also be given to running alcohol-free events and to the cultural and religious aspects of such events.
- Any member of the Scout Network or a Scout Active Support Unit should be expected to follow the same standards as other leaders.
- All young people and adults in the section or Group should be aware of the standards of behaviour. It is good practice to draw up codes of conduct in advance of events.
- Young people and adults should be helped to understand the issues associated with alcohol and to seek advice.

### **Help and information**

Facts provided are courtesy of the Institute of Alcohol Studies and Alcohol Concern. If you would like more information, please contact:

- [www.ias.org.uk](http://www.ias.org.uk)
- [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)
- [talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com)
- [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk)

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