Alcohol & Mental Health

Understand the impact. Notice the pattern. Know what to do.

WHAT IS IT?

Alcohol is a drug that affects the brain and body. Drinking ranges from occasional use to harmful use or dependence.

Concern grows when drinking is used to cope, affects safety or wellbeing, or becomes difficult to reduce.

5 WAYS ALCOHOL CAN AFFECT SOMEONE

01 Mood & anxiety

Relief may be brief. Low mood or anxiety can rise as alcohol wears off, creating a cycle of drinking to cope.

02 Judgement & safety

Slower reactions, decisions, coordination and self-control can increase conflict, injury and unsafe choices.

03 Sleep & recovery

Alcohol disrupts sleep quality, energy, concentration and physical recovery.

04 Relationships & daily life

Secrecy, guilt, missed commitments, money worries or arguments can affect home, friendships, work, education and sport.

05 Tolerance & dependence

Cravings may grow and more alcohol may be needed for the same effect. Withdrawal can include shaking, sweating, anxiety, nausea and poor sleep.

A coach notices and supports —a coach does not diagnose.

TEXT TEAMMATE 85258
ChildLine 0800 1111
Lifeline 0808 808 8000
"It's alright to ask for help" SAMARITANS 116 123

Notice. Respond. Connect.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice—and what to do next.

- Smelling of alcohol, intoxication or repeated hangovers.
- Missing sessions, arriving late, becoming unreliable or leaving suddenly.
- Reduced coordination, concentration, recovery or performance—or more injuries.
- Drinking becoming central to socialising or coping—or saying they cannot cut down.
- Irritability, anxiety, low mood, aggression, secrecy or withdrawal.
- Shaking, sweating, nausea or agitation when alcohol is unavailable.

Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign?
Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

URGENT / MEDICAL

Do not let an intoxicated person play, drive or supervise children. Call 999 for unconsciousness, slow or irregular breathing, seizure, severe confusion, serious injury or suspected alcohol poisoning. Stay with them. If dependence is suspected, do not advise sudden unsupported detox.

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

GP / LOCAL SERVICE
Health Trust Support Services
drugsandalcoholni.info
TEXT "TEAMMATE" TO 85258
LIFELINE 0808 808 8000

HELP!

The TEAMMATE 85258 · ChildLine 0800 1111 · Lifeline 0808 808 8000 · "It's alright to ask for help" SAMARITANS 116 123

5 WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

01 Start an honest conversation

Speak when they are sober. Use observations rather than accusations: “I’ve noticed you seem low and are drinking more. How are things?” Listen without judgement or labels.

Speak in a quiet, appropriate place, out of earshot where possible but still observable and within your club’s safeguarding arrangements.

02 Help them recognise the connection

Gently explore how alcohol affects their mood, anxiety, sleep, relationships and participation in sport.

Ask what drinking provides in the moment—and what it costs afterwards. This helps the person identify their own reasons for change.

03 Agree one realistic next step

This could be recording alcohol use and mood, avoiding drinking triggers, choosing alcohol-free activities or arranging a GP appointment.

Do not demand perfection; recognise progress and respond to setbacks without shame.

04 Connect alcohol and mental-health support

Alcohol use and mental-health difficulties should be addressed together. Offer to help them contact their GP or find a local service through the Northern Ireland Drugs and Alcohol Service Directory.

Continue checking in.

05 Challenge unsafe behaviour and act on risk

Being supportive does not mean covering up harm, supplying alcohol or ignoring threats to safety. Importantly, someone who experiences shaking, sweating, nausea or anxiety without alcohol may be dependent and should not stop suddenly without medical advice.

Severe shaking, confusion, hallucinations or seizures require 999.

For emotional crisis in Northern Ireland, contact Lifeline: 0808 808 8000, or Text Teammate 85258, available 24/7

TAKE 5 FOR WELLBEING

Five evidence based everyday actions to help maintain and improve wellbeing.

CONNECT
Spend time with people who help you feel supported.

BE ACTIVE
Walk, run, cycle, play sports and games.

TAKE NOTICE
Pause & take notice of the world around you. Chill & relax.

KEEP LEARNING
Try something new or build a skill your value.

GIVE
Offer time, kindness or encouragement to help others.

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