

Dear Parent

## End of term and exam stress

May/June is the time of exams and for many of our kids, time to prepare for leaving or changing schools. It can be a stressful and emotional time. If you can, maybe plan a couple of nice things to look forward to with them and be prepared for leaving parties and end of exam celebrations.

Take a look at [www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/Pages/Parents/parentparties.html](http://www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/Pages/Parents/parentparties.html) for top tips.

## Long summer evenings?

The evenings are light and your kids may well want to be out with their mates, playing football, in town or at the park. It's great to encourage fresh air and exercise but do check from time to time that their plans are genuine and they are with who they say they are with! It may seem sneaky or that you don't trust them, but parks and public spaces are, after parties, the most common place for underage kids to drink, you could drive by or say you'll come and watch or pick them up, tell them to keep their phone on and have a set time for them to be home by. Encourage them to play sport in a club setting too if possible.

## Young people in Leeds say they binge drink because they are bored

One of the main reasons that kids give for drinking in public places or when they are hanging around with their mates is that they are bored and there is nothing else to do. If you're working or you can't think about what to do in the holidays or weekends to keep your kids occupied as they get older, then take a look at [www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/Pages/Parents/parentwtdd.html](http://www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/Pages/Parents/parentwtdd.html) encouraging them to get a holiday or weekend job can really help. For those under 16 baby sitting, dog walking and helping mates with odd jobs can be an option. There are some wonderful volunteering opportunities, also sports, youth and holiday clubs are a great help.

An example is the Leeds Community Foundation whose research shows young people in Leeds have significantly higher rates of cannabis use, but significantly lower rates of alcohol use, than for the country as a whole. Their experts warn there is a close relationship between underage alcohol misuse, low educational attainment and adult criminal behaviour. Leeds Community Foundation is supporting a network that helps to give youngsters 'a sporting chance'. The specially trained team at The Beck in Killingbeck, work with 1,000 young people a year through a range of sports activities to boost their confidence and raise their aspirations.



## Study shows the way we ask our kids about what they've been up to makes a difference

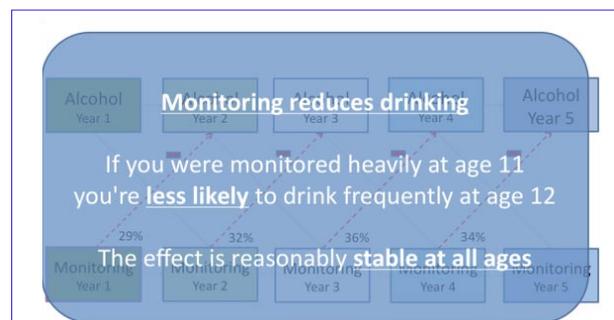
The Belfast youth development study has shown that if we monitor our kids carefully at age 11 and upwards, they're much less likely to drink frequently, but how we keep a check on them makes a real difference. If you say 'what have you been doing?' there is no effect. If you take an approach such as "Tell me and you can go out," this works better and if you use an engaging open question like "Oh, tell me more" it is the most effective approach.

**BYDS**  
THE BELFAST YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STUDY

**Stage 1: Parental monitoring**

- Greater monitoring of younger children's behaviour tends to reduce the frequency with which they drink alcohol
- The effect is stable across time, from age 11 to age 16

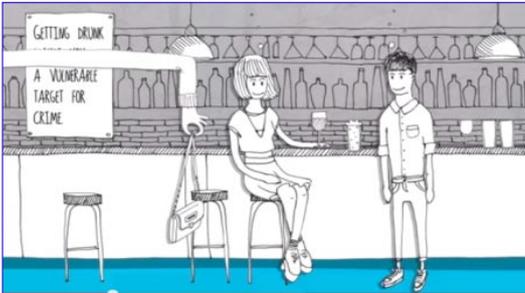
Queen's University Belfast Institute of Child Care Research



## Students going off to college and university

If your kids are going off to College or University or leaving home, you might like to encourage them to watch the YouTube campaign 'No Sleep Lost'. Figures given in the film clip are based on a survey of Irish university students that found that 59% of guys woke up after drinking with no idea how they got there and 49% of girls had woken up in a situation where they felt uncomfortable (20% found themselves in bed with someone they didn't know). Encourage them to take a look.

[www.nosleeplost.ie/](http://www.nosleeplost.ie/)



Birmingham University have also made some

film clips about staying safe on campus. The security department, as part of their UBSAFE campaign have made a cartoon around the potential effects of heavy drinking and how it might impact a student's life.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtZKk6DROpA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtZKk6DROpA)

## New alcohol 'craze' what next after Nek nominate?

There are two new alcohol products on the horizon to be aware of. One is the 'Vaportini'. The \$35 Vaportini heats alcohol, releasing intoxicating vapours, which are breathed through a straw after being heated by a candle to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Bypassing the digestive system, the Vaportini causes alcohol to be ingested directly to the bloodstream through the lungs, potentially causing dangerous levels of intoxication - especially if abused.

Normally, when a drink is consumed, alcohol is absorbed through the stomach (10%) and in the small intestine (85%). The presence of food slows this process further. When alcohol is inhaled, however, alcohol enters the lungs and goes directly into the bloodstream, causing a much more rapid and stronger buzz. The danger of vaporised alcohol entering the bloodstream directly as opposed to through the digestive system is that protective impulses - such as vomiting - are bypassed.

The second product, Palcohol is a powdered alcohol which turns water into vodka and rum. It was given approval in error in the US on April 8 and was withdrawn 13 days later. The US Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau had originally approved various types of Palcohol, ranging from lemon drops to cosmopolitans. If this product was obtained over the internet, the worry is that it would allow underage drinkers to take powdered alcohol into venues to 'lace' soft drinks to make them alcoholic.

## Less truancy and a record number of fines for parents

We know that children who routinely miss school are more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as underage drinking, so it has been good news to hear that a third fewer pupils are regularly missing school. 300,895 were persistently absent in 2012 to 2013, down from 433,130 in 2009 to 2010. 130,000 fewer pupils were missing 15% of school - equivalent to missing 18 months of a whole school career

Record numbers of parents were fined last year after their children played truant from school. 52,370 £60 penalty notices were issued to parents and guardians for a child's unauthorised absence from school in 2012/13 - up 27% from 41,224 in 2011/12.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-academic-year-2012-to-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-academic-year-2012-to-2013)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2012-to-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2012-to-2013)

## Plan for parents to help put children safety first

Cafcass, the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service, has developed a new and improved Parenting Plan, an interactive tool to help parents (and other family members) following separation to parent cooperatively and safely. The plan leads parents towards making practical decisions about parenting and resolving disputes in a way that retains focus on their child.

[www.cafcass.gov.uk/news/2014/march/plan-for-parents-to-help-put-child-safety-first.aspx](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/news/2014/march/plan-for-parents-to-help-put-child-safety-first.aspx)

For further information on any of the above please contact

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