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 **Alcohol dependence and harmful alcohol use quality standard.**
**National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.****National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2011.**


*From the UK health service standard-setting agency, a concise statement of 13 practices which constitute high quality health care for problem drinkers and good practice in identifying and advising hazardous drinkers - standards which may be used to assess and reward providers and health service commissioning authorities.*

**SUMMARY** Quality standards set by expert groups convened by the UK [National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence](#) (NICE) are intended to represent concise aspirational, but achievable, markers of high-quality, cost-effective patient care, derived from the best available evidence. They will be used to assess the performance of health services and will inform associated payment mechanisms and incentive schemes.

The featured set of standards cover the care in all NHS-funded settings of people aged 10 or older dependent on alcohol or drinking in a harmful way. They also include opportunistic screening and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful drinkers and address the prevention and management of [Wernicke's encephalopathy](#), but not the management of other disorders associated with drinking. Also available is an associated [guide for commissioners](#) of services.

**The standards**

Below verbatim are the agreed quality standards sometimes with explanatory notes drawn from the standards. The meaning, assessment and practice implications of each is expanded on in the source documents.

- 1** Health and social care staff receive alcohol awareness training that promotes respectful, non-judgmental care of people who misuse alcohol.
- 2** Health and social care staff [opportunistically](#) carry out screening and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful drinking as an integral part of practice.
- 3** [People](#) who may benefit from specialist assessment or treatment for alcohol misuse are offered referral to specialist alcohol services and are [able to access](#) specialist alcohol treatment.
- 4** People accessing specialist alcohol services receive assessments and interventions delivered by [appropriately](#) trained and competent specialist staff.
- 5** Adults accessing specialist alcohol services for alcohol misuse receive a comprehensive assessment that includes the use of validated measures.
- 6** Children and young people accessing specialist services for alcohol use receive a comprehensive assessment that includes the use of validated measures.
- 7** Families and carers of people who misuse alcohol have [their own needs](#) identified, including those associated with risk of harm, and are offered information and support.
- 8** People needing medically assisted alcohol withdrawal are offered treatment within the setting [most appropriate](#) to their age, the severity of alcohol dependence, their social support and the presence of any physical or psychiatric comorbidities.
- 9** People needing medically assisted alcohol withdrawal receive medication using drug regimens appropriate to the setting in which the withdrawal is managed in accordance with NICE guidance.
- 10** People with suspected, or at high risk of developing, Wernicke's encephalopathy are offered thiamine in accordance with NICE guidance.
- 11** Adults who misuse alcohol are offered evidence-based [psychological interventions](#), and those with alcohol dependence that is moderate or severe can in addition access relapse prevention [medication](#) in accordance with NICE guidance.
- 12** Children and young people accessing specialist services for alcohol use are offered individual cognitive behavioural therapy, or if they have significant comorbidities or limited social support, a [multicomponent](#) programme of care including family or systems therapy.
- 13** People receiving specialist treatment for alcohol misuse have regular treatment outcome reviews, which are used to plan subsequent care.

 **COMMENTARY** Other related NICE guidance documents are listed below.

[Alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis, assessment and management of harmful drinking and alcohol dependence](#) Assessment of what evaluation research means for alcohol dependence treatment in Britain, featuring reviews of the literature on the topics it covers.

[Alcohol-use disorders: preventing the development of hazardous and harmful drinking](#) Prevention guidelines which prioritised population-wide changes like price rises and outlet restrictions which affect everyone, independent of the choices they make.

### [Alcohol use disorders: diagnosis and clinical management of alcohol-related physical complications](#)

Clinical guidelines on the medical care of people suffering acute alcohol withdrawal or alcohol-related lack of thiamine, liver disease, or inflammation of the pancreas.

[Services for the identification and treatment of hazardous drinking, harmful drinking and alcohol dependence in children, young people and adults](#) Guidance for commissioners on how to organise and procure alcohol treatment and brief intervention services in an area which implement related national clinical guidance and satisfy policy requirements.

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[Services for the identification and treatment of hazardous drinking, harmful drinking and alcohol dependence in children, young people and adults](#) DOCUMENT 2011

[Alcohol-use disorders: Preventing the development of hazardous and harmful drinking](#) REVIEW 2010

[An evaluation to assess the implementation of NHS delivered alcohol brief interventions: final report](#) STUDY 2011

[Reducing alcohol harm: health services in England for alcohol misuse](#) STUDY 2008

[Supporting partnerships to reduce alcohol harm: key findings, recommendations and case studies from the Alcohol Harm Reduction National Support Team](#) STUDY 2011

[Evidence-based practice? The National Probation Service's work with alcohol-misusing offenders](#) STUDY 2009

[Reducing the impact of alcohol-related harm to Londoners – how well are we doing?](#) STUDY 2011

[Alcohol screening and brief intervention in primary health care](#) STUDY 2012

[Alcohol screening and brief intervention in emergency departments](#) STUDY 2012

[Effectiveness of screening and brief alcohol intervention in primary care \(SIPS trial\): pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial](#) STUDY 2013