

Keys group Specialist Substance Misuse Advisor

Fran Gracie

The particular case below discusses how a systems approach can be beneficial and how this way of working helped a young person make positive changes.

I recently completed a session with a young person who occasionally drinks alcohol in excess with her friends. Drinking alcohol usually leads the young person to feeling angry, therefore she becomes aggressive towards her carers.

In our session, we discussed an event where the young person had drunk a significant amount of alcohol which led to a number of concerning behaviours in the community. Due to heavy intoxication the young person hadn't remembered what she had done, she was relying on others such as friends and carers to recall the events for her. The young person stated that she was highly embarrassed about her behaviour and felt very remorseful the following day. The young person was clearly upset by these events, which also didn't help her terrible hangover.

We discussed low risk drinking guidelines for 18's and over. The chief medical officers guidelines are not to drink more than 14 units per week on a regular basis. Based on what the young person stated that she drank in that one evening, this far exceeded an adults safe weekly drinking guidelines. I was able to discuss some alcohol education, the impacts on her physical health, we also discussed brain development and lowered inhibitions leading to these risk taking behaviours.

Drinkaware.co.uk say that in the past week 22% of UK Teenagers will have drunk 15 units or more in that week and that girls were more likely to report being drunk than boys.

The following day she felt more anxious and lower in mood. I was able to explain that alcohol is a depressant substance which will only make you feel worse as opposed to making you feel good. Suppressing emotions with substances such as

alcohol is likely to lead to a person disconnecting with themselves and there is often a snowball effect where the problem can grow and lead into an addiction.

I completed some auricular acupressure treatment with the young person, where small gold acupressure beads were placed onto the young persons ear, this treatment has been helping her feel less anxious and enabling her get a better nights' sleep.

As with most adolescents we know that experimenting with alcohol and other substances is part of their development and a strive for autonomy. It may not be a possibility that this young person is ready to be abstinent from alcohol, but she is now educated on the harmful effects on alcohol and also has received some harm minimisation advice. This is hoped that she will drink at safer levels and use specific strategies to keep her safer from harm. I have skilled the team up at the home with substance misuse training, I have had regular consultation meetings with the Manager and staff team.

The team will continue to deliver substance misuse sessions and will contact me for further support and guidance as and when this is required.

