Alcohol Use:

The Department of Health guidelines for safe drinking state that:

For men, drinking between 3 and 4 units a day or less indicates no significant risk to health (1 unit = approximately ½ a pint of beer, 1 measure of spirit, or 1 glass of wine). Regularly drinking 4 or more units of alcohol a day indicates an increased risk to health.

For women, drinking between 2 and 3 units a day or less, indicates no significant risk to health. Regularly drinking over 3 units a day signifies an increased risk to health.
Alcohol Use - QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the answer most relevant to you

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?
   - NEVER
   - MONTHLY OR LESS
   - TWO TO FOUR TIMES A WEEK
   - TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK
   - FOUR OR MORE TIMES A WEEK

2. How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?
   - 1 or 2
   - 3 or 4
   - 5 or 6
   - 7 to 9
   - 10 or more

3. How often during the past year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?
   - NEVER
   - LESS THAN MONTHLY
   - MONTHLY
   - WEEKLY
   - DAILY, OR ALMOST DAILY

4. How often during the past year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?
   - NEVER
   - LESS THAN MONTHLY
   - MONTHLY
   - WEEKLY
   - DAILY, OR ALMOST DAILY

5. Has a relative or friend, doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?
   - NO
   - YES, BUT NOT IN THE PAST YEAR
   - YES, DURING THE PAST YEAR
Scoring

Question 1: Never = 0, Monthly or less = 1, Two to four times a week = 2, Two or three times a week = 3, Four or more times a week = 4

Question 2: 1 or 2 = 0, 3 or 4 = 1, 5 or 6 = 2, 7 to 9 = 3, 10 or more = 4

Question 3: Never = 0, Less than monthly = 1, Monthly = 2, Weekly = 3, Daily or almost daily = 4

Question 4: Never = 0, Less than monthly = 1, Monthly = 2, Weekly = 3, Daily or almost daily = 4

Question 5: No = 0, Yes, but not in the past year = 2, Yes during the past year = 4

Interpretation of Scoring
1. A score of 5 or more indicates that there may be an alcohol problem, and that there should be fuller evaluation. It should be remembered that although people may be more honest filling in a questionnaire than face-to-face, they are still likely to underestimate consumption and effects.
2. If questions 3, 4 or 5 are checked as other than No or Never there is likely to be concern that the pattern of drinking may be impacting on the children.
3. Interpretation may be helped by looking at the Department of Health guidelines:

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For women, drinking between 2 and 3 units a day or less, indicates no significant risk to health. Regularly drinking over 3 units a day signifies an increased risk to health.

Reference:
11. The questionnaire can be scored (see overleaf), but should be viewed primarily as a tool to help to raise the subject of alcohol, and to provide the opportunity to address any issues that may arise, particularly in the responses to questions 3, 4 and 5.

12. The questionnaire covers:
   - Frequency of alcohol consumption (question 1)
   - Number of drinks consumed in a typical day (question 2)
   - Ability to control drinking (question 3)
   - Failure to carry out expected tasks as consequence of the effects of alcohol (question 4)
   - Whether others are concerned about the individuals drinking (question 5)

Use

13. The questionnaire can be useful to provide a baseline, either at initial or core assessment or during ongoing work.

14. The questionnaire can help to detect drinking issues in circumstances where alcohol problems are not suspected. Drinking habits are often hidden, even from other family members.

15. It is important that the questionnaire is used as a basis for discussion of drinking patterns. For example, it may be useful to explore with carers how they manage their children when they are drinking. If they go the pub – what happens to the children?

16. Where the worker is uncertain how to interpret the response to the questionnaire they should consult a professional who is experienced in this field.

Administration

17. The introduction of the questionnaire will have to be carefully planned, particularly with carers from communities where the use of alcohol is frowned upon. One approach is to explain that it is important to understand families’ approach to drinking alcohol, and that asking parents to fill out a questionnaire can be a useful starting point for discussion. It can be emphasised that the worker is not for or against drinking, but from the children’s point of view it is helpful to know what part it plays in day to day family life.

18. Although designed to be self-administered, the questionnaire can also be used as a series of initial probes for use by the worker.