

**HSE Press Release:**

Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017

**HSE advise parents to “ask about alcohol” with teenagers ahead of exam celebrations**

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

The HSE is encouraging parents to talk to teenagers about alcohol ahead of their Leaving and Junior Certificate end of exam celebrations this month.

Parents are the most important influence in educating young people about the risks associated with underage drinking and substance use and in influencing their attitudes. They can also make a big difference in protecting their children and giving them an understanding of the importance of self management and self care. As a parent, you may feel you can't make a difference, faced with the influence of your child's friends, alcohol marketing messages and the Irish 'drinking' culture, but **children and teens need our protection when it comes to alcohol and substance use.**

Dr Bobby Smyth, Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist, HSE advises: *“Research has shown that children who have conversations with their parents and learn a lot about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are up to 50% less likely to use alcohol and drugs than those who don't have such conversations”*<sup>[1]</sup>.

[AskAboutAlcohol.ie](http://AskAboutAlcohol.ie) offers a resource and support for parents, with information, advice and the full facts to help your child stay safe and be smart around alcohol. Some helpful advice on AskAboutAlcohol.ie for parents of teenagers includes:

- [Alcohol and young people – what you and your child should know](#)
- [Top 10 Tips for Parents](#) – a great starting point for parents
- [Tips for talking to a teen](#) - how to approach the conversation and what to say
- [Guide for dealing with parties and discos](#)

The Leaving and Junior Cert exams will finish mid-late June, with exam results coming out in August and September. While young people deserve to celebrate their hard work after their exams, it is important for parents to realise that they have a big role to play in highlighting alternative opportunities for celebrations, rather than having alcohol as the central focus. It is also a good opportunity to have open conversations around the facts about alcohol before the celebrations begin, in case they do find themselves in drinking situations.

Alcohol should play no part in Junior Certificate celebrations, and parents can support young people to enjoy their success by organising a celebration at home or elsewhere, or to go to age-appropriate events where alcohol will not be an option. Even if your child is over 18, parents should openly talk with teenagers about what their plans are, who they will be with, how they will get home, etc. It is also important to let your child know that they can always call you, no matter what.

If you think your child is drinking, AskAboutAlcohol.ie provides advice and information to parents and a guide for setting rules around alcohol. Parents can also contact the HSE Alcohol Helpline on 1800 459 459 if you have a question or worry in relation to your child and alcohol.

**For further information:**

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

Contact the Alcohol and Drugs Helpline on 1800 459 459.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention, Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 2012.

Email [helpline@hse.ie](mailto:helpline@hse.ie) Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.30pm.  
For information on other drugs visit [www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie)

ENDS

**\*\*\*HSE experts are available for interview on this topic**

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