

Things to consider to keep people experiencing homelessness* safe



Support for alcohol users

Purpose:

To promote an open channel of communication between The Salvation Army and Change Grow Live teams.

The impact of coronavirus affects us all. More than ever, we need to work together to support the people who use our services, our staff and communities.

This is the first joint communication from The Salvation Army and Change Grow Live to discuss how we work with people experiencing homelessness who are dependent on alcohol during this time. Physical distancing measures mean people using our services may not be able to get alcohol in their normal way. We recognise the potential issues this could present to people experiencing homelessness.

Over the coming weeks, we need to keep people as safe as possible, and provide any additional support they may need. We must continue to balance the importance of helping people stay safe and increase physical distancing, with the other risks relevant to that individual.

This is a challenging situation and a time for collaboration, to do things differently and think creatively about how we respond. These questions are to help you advocate in support of the people who use our services, make decisions about managing alcohol dependency and ultimately meet the needs of our community.

? We ask that Change Grow Live clinical services consider

- ▶ Can you liaise with the Lifehouse staff to establish a baseline of dependent drinkers using the AUDIT screening tool?
- ▶ Can you set up a virtual clinic to screen for severity of dependency (SADQ)?
- ▶ Can you design a personalised alcohol treatment response plan for individuals? The plan could include:
 - remote alcohol detoxification
 - safe drink down plan
 - referral for in-patient detox
 - allow the minimal consumption of alcohol on site for those who are known to be alcohol dependent
 - linkage to online mutual aid and groups.
- ▶ How capable is the individual to manage their alcohol detox medication?
- ▶ Are there any mental or physical health concerns?
- ▶ Are there any safeguarding concerns?
- ▶ Is the individual in shared accommodation?

? Things to consider for the temporary accommodation team

- ▶ When co-producing people's alcohol treatment response plan, consider:
 - remote alcohol detoxification
 - safe drink down plan
 - referral for in-patient detox
 - allow the minimal consumption of alcohol on site for those who are known to be alcohol dependent
- ▶ Are people capable of self-regulating their alcohol use without needing clinical interventions and support?
- ▶ How often are people taking trips to the shop to purchase alcohol? Can you support people to increase physical distancing by reducing the number of unnecessary trips?
- ▶ Do you feel confident identifying alcohol withdrawal? Please note if a person is experiencing acute and potentially dangerous alcohol withdrawals, ring 999.

We would like you to tell us what you need. The situation is evolving, and our responses will change. If you have concerns, requests or want to consider options, please call your local Change Grow Live service. You might want to:

- ask a nurse once a week to speak to staff and people who use our services
- request unit measuring glasses / measuring cups and drink diaries
- arrange virtual training on how to identify signs of alcohol withdrawal and to know when to ring 999 if the situation is too difficult to manage.

We will provide more information as things evolve, and to respond to your requests. We are working together to help you.

* homelessness includes people sleeping rough and people in temporary accommodation e.g. hostels, refuges, temporary arrangements with friends/family, B&Bs, night shelters and Housing First.