

Brief Interventions

What is it?

Screening and brief interventions aim to identify current or potential problems with substance use and motivate those at risk to change their substance use behaviour. Brief Interventions can range from 5 minutes of brief advice to 15-30 minutes of brief counselling. Generally, brief interventions are not intended to treat people with serious substance dependence; however, they are a valuable tool for treatment for problematic or risky substance use. Brief Interventions can also be used to encourage those with more serious dependence to accept more intensive treatment such as detox in hospital, or referral to a specialised alcohol and drug treatment agency. The aim of the intervention is to help the patient understand that their substance use is putting them at risk and to encourage them to reduce or give up their substance use. Brief interventions should be personalised and offered in a supportive, non-judgmental manner

There is strong evidence for the effectiveness of brief interventions in primary care settings for alcohol and tobacco, and growing evidence of effectiveness for other substances. Brief interventions are effective across all levels of hazardous and harmful substance use and so are ideally suited for use as a method of health promotion and disease prevention with service users.