

Summary of a recommendation by COHERE 11 June 2020  
Finland

## Recommendation: Psychosocial methods in the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol dependence

*At its meeting of 11 June 2020, the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) adopted a recommendation on psychosocial methods in the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol dependence.*

The recommendation by COHERE Finland applies to the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol dependence among adults, young people and people with psychiatric comorbidity. This recommendation does not cover treatment methods for high-risk and harmful alcohol use.

Alcohol dependence is a disease affecting hundreds of thousands of people in Finland and having an indirect effect on the wellbeing and health of their families and friends, especially children. It is a very severe condition that develops through alcohol use with no obvious harmful effects.

The recommendation clarifies that the methods used in the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol dependence are effective. It also helps increase the equal availability of treatments that have been found effective, make services more client-oriented and promote a comprehensive approach to treatment and rehabilitation.

COHERE Finland considers that the following psychosocial treatment and rehabilitation methods that have been found effective in the treatment and rehabilitation of alcohol dependence are included in the range of public health services:

- cognitive behavioural therapy
- the 12-step treatment programme
- couples and family therapy
- motivational interviewing as part of the overall treatment
- the community reinforcement approach and family counselling associated with the community reinforcement approach as part of the overall treatment.

In treating alcohol dependence among young people, the range of services includes cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy, interventions combining family therapy and individual-based treatment, and motivational interviewing as part of the overall treatment.

With regard to treating psychiatric comorbidity, the range of services includes cognitive behavioural therapy in the treatment of co-occurring substance abuse and depression, and dialectic behavioural therapy in the treatment of co-occurring substance abuse and emotionally unstable personality disorder.

When using the above-mentioned methods in the treatment or rehabilitation of patients, account must be taken of the form and nature of alcohol dependence, the associated somatic and psychiatric disorders and social effects. This can be achieved by ensuring:

- correct timing of actions
- personalised treatment
- realistic goals for treatment and rehabilitation
- treatment of co-occurring mental health disorders
- cooperation between different parties and the support and treatment needed by families and friends



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- case management, which helps make patients more committed to their treatment and better target resources at those who will benefit from them
- all key actors in young people's living environments are taken into account when treating young people
- treatment or rehabilitation is provided as outpatient care or in an institution depending on the patient's needs, medical condition and functional capacity.

In order for the effective methods to become firmly established, service organisers need to ensure that service providers have a sufficient range of treatment and rehabilitation methods at their disposal and that the methods are actually used. The treatment of patients may be ineffective if alcohol dependence is treated without sufficient expertise in treating mental health disorders and without taking account of comorbid diseases.

The recommendation, the related background material and further information about service choices in healthcare are available on the COHERE Finland [www.palveluvalikoima.fi/en](http://www.palveluvalikoima.fi/en).

*The Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) works in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and its task is to issue recommendations on services that should be included in the range of public health services.*

