Background

- Accidental poisoning is common in the UK. (ROSPA 2018)
- ‘Poisoning denotes exposure to a substance that is dangerous to health or life. A poison may be a drug, household product, industrial chemical, or plant or animal derivative. (NICE).’
- Recent studies have noted a reduction in admissions to hospital due to unintentional poisoning (Mbeledogu et al 2014), but it still represents a significant burden.
- There are few contemporary studies detailing attendances to the emergency department in the UK secondary to poisoning
- Recent local public health campaigns have focused on safe storage of medicines in the home
- E-cigarettes and liquid detergent capsules are becoming popular and may present a significant hazard to children at home (Davis et al 2016)

Methods

- Review of notes of children presenting to Queens Medical Centre Children’s Emergency Department between 1/9/16 and 31/8/17
- Primary diagnosis of poisoning or overdose coded on Medway
- Children under 10 included examined in detail as they made up 97% of accidental ingestions (fig 1.)

Primary Outcomes

- At What ages do children present with poisoning and with which agent?
- Which agents lead to investigation, treatment and admission?

Results

Conclusions

- Poisoning is common in the paediatric age group. Toxin ingestion made up 1.8% of all attendances to the department during the study period and 1.3% in the under 10 group. 20% required admission which is comparable to other presentations.
- Exposure to medication is the most common presenting complaint and is also disproportionally responsible for admission to hospital. (Fig 2, 3)
- The vast majority of ingestions (85%) occur in the home (figure not included).
- Ingestion of essential oils and other household fragrances have a high admission rate. (Fig 2)
- The 4 hour wait target may artificially raise the admission rate as recommended post-exposure observation times are prolonged or require timed observations.
- This study adds important contemporary information about common toxins leading to presentation at the emergency department and which are leading to admission.
- Although comprising only 6.7% of attendances, exposure to essential oils resulted in 11.3% of admissions. The most common source of ingestion were reed diffusors. Additional public health campaigns aimed at educating parents about the dangers of these common household items may be warranted.