

CASE STUDY: Alcohol Concern

Who are we?

Alcohol Concern is a small independent charity. We work throughout England and Wales towards our vision of a world where alcohol does no harm. We are not anti-alcohol, we just want to improve people's lives by reducing the harm caused by it.

We help people through information, advice and guidance; help professionals through training, projects and research; and help all of us through campaigning to challenge the drinking culture in our country.

Our work includes:

- Campaigning for changes to the law to reduce alcohol-related harm, e.g. minimum unit pricing, lowering the drink-drive limit
- Challenging the drinks industry's methods of making its products appealing to inappropriate audiences and using inappropriate means, e.g. sports sponsorship, supporting young people to challenge alcohol advertising
- Researching better methods to address alcohol-related harm and training healthcare professionals and others to adopt these in their work
- Supporting and promoting individuals to reassess their relationship with alcohol, including running our popular behaviour change campaign '[Dry January](#)'

Why is alcohol an issue?

- Alcohol continues to be the leading risk factor for deaths among both men and women aged 15 – 49
- More than 9 million people in England drink more than the recommended daily limits
- Alcohol costs society 21 billion a year, 3.5 billion of that is cost to the NHS
- In the UK, in 2014 there were 8,697 alcohol-related deaths – that's one death almost every hour
- Alcohol is 10% of the UK burden of disease and death, making alcohol one of the three biggest lifestyle risk factors for disease and death in the UK, after smoking and obesity
- Alcohol is a causal factor in more than 60 medical conditions, including: mouth, throat, stomach, liver and breast cancers; high blood pressure, cirrhosis of the liver; and depression
- Alcohol was 61% more affordable in 2013 than it was in 1980

See our health factsheets for more information [here](#)

We are learning more and more about how alcohol can cause and aggravate health conditions, as well as having a detrimental impact on relationships and prompting antisocial behaviour.

Alcohol is becoming more affordable and the range of settings where alcohol is available is ever increasing. Part of our vision is to help people understand the impact that alcohol can have, so they are able to make educated choices about their own alcohol consumption.

Alcohol in the workplace

In addition to the risk of personal harm, alcohol consumption of staff has a knock on effect in the workplace

Up to 17 million working days are lost each year because of alcohol-related sickness and the cost to employers of sick days due to drink is estimated at £1.7bn. The total annual cost to the economy is estimated to be £7.3bn¹.

There are no precise figures of the number of workplace accidents attributable to alcohol, but the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimated that up to 40% of accidents at work involve or are related to alcohol use.²

For those in manual jobs, these risks can be very great.

Men whose jobs are classified as “routine”, such as van drivers and labourers, face 3.5 times the risk of dying from an alcohol-related disease than those in higher managerial and professional jobs. Women in “routine” jobs, such as cleaners and sewing machinists, face 5.7 times the chance of dying from an alcohol-related disease than women in higher professional jobs such as doctors and lawyers.³

What can you do?

It's not always obvious when you're drinking too much. However, your alcohol consumption could be affecting you in a number of different ways that you didn't even realise. Weight gain, lack of sleep and trouble concentrating can all be caused by excess drinking.

The Alcohol Concern website has a range of tools that you can use to work out exactly how much alcohol you're drinking and the likely impact it's having on your body. We have also busted some myths about drinking, so you can make an informed decision about the amount of alcohol you consume in the future.

As an individual you might choose to:

- Understand your own drinking better, using an app like [Drink Less](#) (available on our website for free)
- Take a break from drinking – we run the [Dry January](#) campaign, but you don't need to wait till next year to try making changes to your own consumption

¹ 2009-10 prices. National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (June 2010), 'Business case: Alcohol-use disorders: preventing harmful drinking'.

² Institute of Alcohol Studies, 'Alcohol in the workplace factsheet', March 2014.

³ ONS, 'Alcohol death rate greater for women and men in routine jobs', May 2011.

- Seek advice from your GP or a local service if you are concerned about your own drinking
- If you are concerned about yourself or a loved one, there is a directory of [local services](#) you can contact on our website

If you are an employer there is a lot you can do to make your workplace a safer and more productive place, as well as to encourage and support your staff to have a healthy relationship with alcohol:

- Offer comprehensive health insurance – if you have a policy already, check that it has adequate alcohol coverage
- Implement effective workplace policies – a strong, clear policy can reduce alcohol problems as well as legal liability. Occupations such as construction and transportation are especially vulnerable to hazardous alcohol use
- Intensify health education and awareness – programmes that address risks of excessive alcohol use reduce stigma, eliminate barriers to treatment and can minimise the impact of alcohol on the workplace
- Promote confidential screening – self assessing drinking can help employees open the door to intervention and treatment
- Offer/expend employee assistance programmes – your programme might include confidential screening and counselling, worksite awareness programs, web based information, recovery support for workers in treatment
- Supervisor training to spot productivity problems – make sure supervisors have the skills and confidence to identify and tackle problem drinking
- Manage employees time off and return to work – take an active role in managing employees who are temporarily off the job while receiving treatment for alcohol problems – making reasonable accommodations and easing the return can help retain trained employees
- Don't be afraid to sanction – it is important to acknowledge alcohol related issues, and not just hope the problem will go away

Alcohol concern has a team of consultants who can help with these steps to ensure you are well prepared and able to deal with any issues which might arise.

Alcohol Concern Campaigns

Six pack swap

With summer approaching are you thinking about shifting a few pounds and getting a bit fitter?

Join our health challenge by swapping that six-pack of beers for something a bit healthier. Welcome to the Six Pack Swap.

You don't have to give up booze entirely if you don't want to, but with the average adult getting 10% of their calories from it, it's a great place to start and see noticeable differences.

The campaign starts on 13th June and with regular exercise and nutrition tips it could see you feeling fitter by the end of it.

Sign up [today](#).

Dry January

Why not join in with Dry January, the best health initiative around. In 2016 1 in 6 people in the UK claimed to take part, so if you're not doing it there is a chance your friends and colleagues are!

In just 4 weekends you can achieve the following:

Weight loss, improved sleep, far more energy, lower cholesterol and blood pressure Plus you save a load of cash!

Dry January is also in aid of charity, Alcohol Concern, so by taking part you'll be doing your bit to help those harmed in some way by alcohol.

Pledge [today](#) and we'll get back in touch nearer the time. For more information please contact us: dryjanuary@alcoholconcern.org.uk

Alcohol Awareness Week

The [2016 Alcohol Awareness Week](#) will run from 14th to 20th November.

It's estimated that the cost of alcohol on society is £21billion. The aim of Alcohol Awareness Week is to get people thinking about alcohol – how it affects us as individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Who can take part?

Anyone! The week is a fantastic opportunity for many different organisations to take part.

If you would like to help those affected by Alcohol why not get in touch with Alcohol Concern and support our work? You can support our campaigns, make a donation or attend one of our hilarious comedy nights, Dry Humour. With line ups including Jo Brand, Milton Jones, Arthur Smith and Stuart Lee, you are guaranteed a top quality night, full of laughter with none of the hangover.

Enquire today: contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk or call us today on 020 7566 9800