



ALCOHOL AND THE **WORKPLACE**

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES



WHY PROMOTE THE SENSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE?



Promoting sensible use of alcohol is part of promoting a healthy workplace.

There is no 'safe' level of drinking alcohol but sticking to the guidelines lowers your risk of harming your health.

What we eat and drink has an impact on both our physical and mental health. It can affect concentration, mental alertness and ability to cope with everyday stresses.

Employees who are in good health are less likely to need time off work and are likely to be more productive. The costs of an

unhealthy workforce to the UK taxpayer has been estimated at over £60 billion per year.

Excessive drinking can lead to time off work. Heavy drinking can hide other problems and its social acceptability can make it difficult for employees to admit they may be having problems controlling their drinking.

Because drinking is seen as normal it can be difficult for those who are struggling with their drinking to admit this to themselves and others, so a supportive work environment can help employees seek help.

**A SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT CAN
HELP EMPLOYEES WHO ARE STRUGGLING
WITH ALCOHOL TO SEEK HELP**

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The UK Chief Medical Officers advises that drinking alcohol **increases the risk of developing a range of cancers**; mouth, throat, voice box, gullet, large bowel, liver, breast cancer in women and probably also cancer of the pancreas. It also **increases the risks of developing strokes, heart disease, liver disease, damage to the brain and nervous system**. These risks start from any level of drinking and then rise with the amounts of alcohol being drunk. The health harms from regular drinking can develop over many years

HEALTH

and can develop despite drinking for years without any apparent harm. Alcohol is also recognised as playing a role in the **development of anxiety and depression**. Drinking too much alcohol on a single occasion can increase the likelihood of short-term health risks such as **accidents, injuries, misjudging risky situations and losing self-control**. Aside from the personal harm these may cause they also have the potential to **damage an organisation's reputation and risk breaches of health and safety**.

RISKS

WHAT IS THE SENSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL?

THERE IS NO 'SAFE' LEVEL OF DRINKING ALCOHOL BUT STICKING TO THE GUIDELINES LOWERS YOUR RISK OF HARMING YOUR HEALTH

The UK Chief Medical Officers advise that for both men and women, to keep health risks to a low level it is safest **not to drink more than 14 units per week on a regular basis**. If you regularly drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread your drinking evenly over 3 or more days. If you have one or two heavy drinking episodes a week you increase your risk of long term illness and injury.

Reducing short term health risk

The risk of developing a range of health problems increases the more you drink on a regular basis. If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink free days a week.

The advice for men and women who want to keep their short-term health risks from single occasion drinking to a low level is to reduce them by:

- **Limiting the total amount of alcohol you drink on any single occasion**
- **Drinking more slowly, drinking with food, and alternating with water**
- **Planning ahead to avoid problems, for example, making sure you can get home safely or that you have people you trust with you**

Certain groups of people are more likely to be affected by alcohol and should be more careful of their drinking on any one occasion. These can include those at risk of falls, on medication that may interact with alcohol or those with any pre-existing physical and mental health problems that could be exacerbated.

Drinking in pregnancy

If you are pregnant or think you could become pregnant the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all to keep risks to you baby to a minimum. Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk

More information

For more information and advice on low risk alcohol consumption, please visit:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-consumption-advice-on-low-risk-drinking

WHAT DOES 14 UNITS LOOK LIKE?

To keep health risks to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week. Below are some examples of how 14 units translates into actual drinks.



14 UNITS = 14 glasses of 40% whisky Based on Single 25ml Glasses (61kcal each)



14 UNITS = 6 pints of 4% beer Based on 568ml Pint Glasses (182kcal each)



14 UNITS = 6 glasses of 13% wine Based on 175ml Glasses (159kcal each)

DON'T 'SAVE UP' YOUR 14 UNITS.

It's best to spread them evenly across the week, something like this...



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

AS AN EMPLOYER, HOW CAN I PROMOTE THE SENSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL?

Typically, employees spend on average one-third of their waking hours at work. The workplace is the ideal environment in which to raise awareness and support a culture of sensible drinking. In some organisations alcohol is linked to work place culture; it can be part of entertaining clients and networking.

Any organisation, large or small, can take simple action to promote sensible drinking, and it doesn't have to be expensive or time

consuming. It is not necessary for all staff to engage or take part in any initiative or project. Even small changes can support an important culture change within your business.

When thinking about sensible drinking, it's a good idea to involve everybody in your workplace, to find out what they want. Consider suggestion boxes, meetings or informal discussions to allow employees to share their views.

WE SPEND ON AVERAGE ONE-THIRD OF OUR WAKING HOURS AT WORK. THIS MAKES IT THE IDEAL PLACE TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE SENSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL

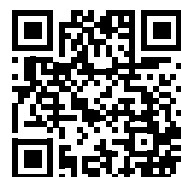
Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice (IBA) in your Workplace

It can be difficult for employees to admit they may be having problems controlling their drinking. You may wish to consider utilising Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice (IBA) with your workforce. This technique allows the individual to think about their own drinking and make an informed choice about the drinking. This typically involves:

- **Identification – using a screening tool to identify 'risky' drinking**
- **Brief Advice – the delivery of short, structured brief advice aimed at encouraging a risky drinker to reduce their alcohol consumption to lower risk levels**

If you are interested in introducing IBA into your workplace, please contact John McGirr, Royal Borough Greenwich Alcohol Strategy Coordinator/Contract Manager for substance misuse services at john.mcgirr@royalgreenwich.gov.uk for information about our free local digital screening tool and online training for brief advice.

Scan the QR code below to access our free IBA tool



**INVITE A QUALIFIED
SPEAKER TO PROVIDE
'LUNCH AND LEARN' OR
BREAKFAST MEETING,
OR TO TALK AT YOUR
TEAM/DEPARTMENT
MEETING**

**ENGAGE WITH
A WORKPLACE AWARD
OR CHARTER WHICH
ENCOURAGES SENSIBLE
DRINKING**

**IN THE WORKPLACE, THERE ARE
MANY WAYS YOU CAN PROMOTE THE
SENSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL.
HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS...**

**DISPLAY POSTERS AND
DISTRIBUTE LEAFLETS
EXPLAINING LOW RISK
DRINKING LEVELS AND
THE HEALTH RISKS OF
ALCOHOL USE**

**PROVIDE
NON-ALCOHOLIC
ALTERNATIVES
IN COMPANY
SANCTIONED
EVENTS OR
CONSIDER GOING
ALCOHOL-FREE**

**ASK FOR
SUGGESTIONS
FROM EVERYBODY
IN YOUR WORKPLACE.
FIND OUT WHAT
THEY WANT**

**HAVING A HEALTH
OR WELLBEING
EVENT/DAY. INCLUDE
INFORMATION AND
AWARENESS RAISING
OF ALCOHOL RISKS**

**TAKE PART IN
NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS
SUCH AS DRY
JANUARY OR SOBER
OCTOBER, AND
PUBLICISE THIS ON
POSTERS, LEAFLETS,
YOUR INTRANET
AND EMPLOYEE
MEETINGS**

**PROMOTE STAFF
TO SIGN UP FOR
SOBER OCTOBER,
DRY JANUARY
OR SIMILAR
CHALLENGES**

**PROVIDE
INFORMATION ON
UNDERSTANDING
ALCOHOL
LABELLING/UNITS**

**DEVELOP A
WORKPLACE
ALCOHOL
POLICY**

Sources of support and information

WDP (Westminster Drug Project)

Free, confidential alcohol and drug treatment services in Greenwich.

www.wdp.org.uk/greenwich

What help is available from WDP?

- Information & advice
- Self-help & mutual aid groups
- Group programme (including LGBTQ+, women-only, evening & weekend groups)
- 1-2-1 sessions with your allocated keyworker
- Family & carers' support and advice
- Outreach & engagement in the community
- Counselling
- A health & wellbeing service for people who use substances at lower levels
- Education, training & employment support
- Peer mentoring & volunteering opportunities
- Outpatient community detox
- BBV screening / vaccination
- Needle exchange & harm reduction advice
- Substitute prescribing
- Access to inpatient detox & residential rehab
- Capital Card® (earn points by engaging in treatment & spend points on activities in your local community)

WDP Opening hours

Please call before coming into the service.
Tel: 0300 303 4552

Any professional such as a housing support worker, social worker, GP or nurse can also make a referral on your behalf.

Monday: 10:00 – 16:30
Tuesday: 10:00 – 16:30
Wednesday: 10:00 – 16:30
Thursday: 10:00 – 12:30
Friday: 10:00 – 16:30

What type of drinker are you?

Our free, confidential, on-line alcohol screening tool for people living, working and studying in Greenwich

www.doyouknowwhentostop.co.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Great Britain

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Live Well Greenwich

For information on physical and emotional wellbeing services locally

www.livewellgreenwich.org.uk

The Good Work Standard

www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/business-and-economy/supporting-business/good-work-standard-gws

Health at Work Guide Alcohol Awareness

British Heart Foundation guide to alcohol awareness in the workplace, including information on developing a workplace alcohol policy

www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications/health-at-work/health-at-work-guide-to-alcohol

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse

Alcohol Change

www.alcoholchange.org.uk

Drinkaware

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Acknowledgements

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