

## factsheet

# how to run a workplace alcohol awareness event



## why run a workplace alcohol awareness event?

- To provide your staff with information and advice to benefit their health and wellbeing
- To keep you and your colleagues safe in the workplace and reduce the risk of accidents
- To reduce alcohol-related sickness absences and staff turnover
- To improve overall work performance and productivity

The effects of alcohol can impact on any workplace.

The frequency of alcohol misuse in the workplace has a direct impact on the organisation and the quality of work.



One in 4 employees in any large workforce typically drink above recommended medical guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

A survey found that a third of employees admit being at work with a hangover (that's 200,000 British employees on any given day), which they admit directly impacts on their productivity and safety in the workplace.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that alcohol cost the Scottish economy **£865 million** in 2007.

This cost comprises unemployment, premature death (before the age of retirement), absenteeism and presenteeism (where people are at work but there is reduced activity and productivity).<sup>3</sup>



# government guidelines recommend limits that carry a low risk of health damage

These are:



**Men:** No more than 3-4 units a day and no more than 21 units a week.



**Women:** No more than 2-3 units a day and no more than 14 units a week.

We all need at least 2 days a week without alcohol.

## organising an awareness event

Be clear on what you want to get out of the event. Set an overall objective. This might be: *“To increase awareness among workers and managers about alcohol-related harm, risks related to alcohol and the workplace, alcohol policies that exist and the way that drinking less can lead to a more productive and healthier workforce.”*

What's most appropriate for your workplace will depend on the company/organisation size, and the nature of the work. For example, an awareness event for a small factory may be very different from one in a local authority or hospital setting. If it's a large workplace, you may wish to target your awareness campaigns and events at specific staff teams.

Think about the culture within your workplace – is the workplace completely alcohol-free? Does alcohol feature when doing business with clients? Or is drinking restricted to the annual Christmas party?

Use the event as an opportunity to raise the issue of alcohol across the workforce, not singling out any individual.

Organise a range of activities that will engage staff, increase their awareness about the risks of drinking too much, and encourage dialogue around alcohol.



## tips

- Providing information through interactive and creative methods is more likely to succeed.
- You may wish to invite an alcohol agency or health improvement practitioner to run an information stand or present to staff if you don't feel you have the knowledge yourself.
- Use the event to launch a new or updated alcohol policy for your workplace.
- Provide information on the availability of treatment and support including through self-referral to specialists outside the organisation.
- Make the event part of a wider healthy living campaign – your workplace could be working towards the Healthy Working Lives Award programme.

# ideas for interactive events

- Factsheets and leaflets
- Props and visual aids – think creatively about how to show the low risk limits for example
- Campaign posters
- Freebies – pens, balloons, key rings
- Alcohol unit and calories calculator
- Unit measure cups
- Group exercises or small group discussions
- Role play
- Use media headlines about alcohol to spark discussions
- Run a competition (with an alcohol-free prize)
- Quizzes
- ‘Mocktail’ bar – healthy juices and smoothies
- Online/app-based screening tools to assess consumption

## Theme

Why not theme your event to tie in with Christmas or Dry January or Men’s Health Week or World Cancer Day or the summer holidays...

Think beyond the individual, e.g. an employee might be a parent of a teenager who is starting to drink and causing their parent concern.

## Timing

When’s the best day and time to hold the event? Are there some days when more employees are out of the office? You may want to try and run the event over lunchtime, perhaps with the incentive of some free (healthy) food! Or you could have a display stand with information in your reception for a whole week.

## Budget

Do you have any money to allocate to the event? It doesn’t have to cost a lot, but you may wish to purchase some resources or props.

## Information sharing

Use your internal newsletter or staff magazine to promote information about the event, your workplace policy and tips for healthier drinking.

Send regular email updates to staff or post information on the company/organisation intranet.

## After the event?

Monitoring and evaluation is important to see if there have been changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviour among staff.

Think about having an annual event which ensures new staff can get involved and existing staff are reminded of the policies and procedures relating to alcohol.

Follow up – is there a need for manager training to be able to respond appropriately to alcohol-related workplace issues? (stress, productivity, absenteeism, intoxication).

## key messages

Drinking less is good for you, your family and your workplace.

Employers have a duty of care to employees because alcohol can cause problems at work.

If you’re concerned about your own or someone else’s drinking, talk to someone. Help is available and your employer will be supportive.



## for more information

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking call Drinkline on 0800 7 314 314 (8am-11pm, 7 days a week).

If you are worried about someone you care about misusing alcohol call Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs on 08080 10 10 11 (Mon-Fri 9am-11pm, Sat/Sun 5pm-11pm).

Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives  
Tel: 0800 019 2211 [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)

Alcohol Focus Scotland  
Tel: 0141 572 6700  
or email: [enquiries@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk)  
[www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk)  
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## references

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