

Alcohol Awareness Week

Alcohol Awareness Week : True Cost of Alcohol

3 – 9 July 2023

Organised by Alcohol Change UK this campaign is run to raise awareness about the potentially damaging effects of drinking too much. This year's theme is the true cost of alcohol, this can mean health costs, financial worries, relationship breakdowns and family difficulties.

Alcohol Change UK conducted a recent survey and found:

- the average drinker spends an estimated £62,899 on alcohol over the course of a lifetime
- one in five drinkers (19%) considered alcohol to be an “essential” item in their shopping basket
- one in ten drinkers (9%) have said they have priorities buying alcohol over essential items
- one in seven drinkers (15%) said that in the last six months they have been worried about how much they are drinking and the same proportion (15%) have been worried about the amount of alcohol someone in their household has been drinking.

The most obvious personal cost of alcohol is to our health. Alcohol damages our bodies in multiple ways: our heart, our liver, our brains, our skin, our liver and our cells – causing seven forms of cancer. Most people who die from alcohol are not fully alcohol-dependent – they're more likely to be heavy drinkers who had no idea quite how dangerous alcohol is. Opening up about your drinking can be an important first step in helping you to consider making some changes for a healthier and happier life.

Watch Susan's story on how alcohol nearly cost her everything but by getting the right kind of support she was finally able to be free of alcohol.

<https://youtu.be/1KKRaMPCGK4>

Understanding more about the impact of alcohol on our lives

[Alcohol and Mental Health](#)

Managing your drinking and getting the right support are really important for your mental health.

The relationship between alcohol and mental health is complex. Some of us use alcohol to try to help manage symptoms of anxiety and depression, but heavy drinking is likely to make those symptoms worse.

[Alcohol and Relationships](#)

Alcohol can affect our relationships in all sorts of ways and can have a negative impact on our own health and wellbeing and that of those we love.

Those of us who drink alcohol do so for a variety of ever-changing reasons, including: to relax, to socialise, to de-stress, to have fun, to relieve boredom, to try and cope with or avoid problems including relationship difficulties, because others around us are drinking, because we feel lonely. However, drinking too much and too often can cause or exacerbate all sorts of problems with our physical and mental health, including damaging relationships with our loved ones.

This doesn't necessarily mean that we should avoid alcohol completely of course, but it is important to understand how alcohol can affect us and our relationships with those around us, and the benefits of cutting down or going alcohol-free.

[Alcohol and Your Body](#)

Drinking alcohol can affect your body in all sorts of different ways; explore Alcohol Change UK's interactive map to understand some of the most common effects on your body.

Finding Ways to Manage Your Drinking

[Am I drinking too much](#) – knowing how much is too much can be confusing when it comes to alcohol. The Chief Medical Officer's recommend it is safest not to drink more than 14 units per week, spread over three or more days and with a few days off.

[Tips for cutting down](#) – thinking about your drinking but not sure where to start? Alcohol Change UK have provided some tips for cutting down alcohol <https://youtu.be/jpG4PW8eCEY>

[Supporting a loved one experiencing problems with alcohol](#) – Alcohol Change UK have provided some information on the signs that your loved one may need help with their drinking and how to have a conversation with them on their drinking habits.

Supports

If you have concerns about you or someone else's alcohol consumption then there are support available:

[Help EAP](#) – The council has an Employee Assistance Programme which offers highly confidential supports to West Lothian Council employees. To access these services contact them on 0800 0285 148 available 24/7.

[WLDAS](#) – West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Services provide high quality, evidence based accessible service aimed at reducing the harm caused by drugs, alcohol and tobacco to West Lothian residents and communities. You can contact them by calling 01506 430225 or by email enquires@wldas.org

[West Lothian HSCP](#) - Your GP will also be able to discuss your alcohol and/or drug use with you and possibly refer you on to a specialist service for treatment.

The Council has a [Misuse of Alcohol, Drugs and other Substances Policy](#) that provides a framework for dealing with misuse in the workplace which is generally dealt with as a conduct issue. Part of that policy however, also recognise the importance of supporting employees with alcohol or drug dependency issues and therefore provides guidance on managers on this matter. If you an issue with alcohol and/or drugs please discuss with your line manager confidentially and we can look at providing support including obtaining advice from our occupational health services.

Online supports

[Try Dry App](#) – hit your targets in your quest to quit drinking with the free support app

[Check Your Drinking Audit Tool](#) – quickly assess how healthy your drinking is with this online quiz

[Unit Calculator](#) – keep tabs on your alcohol consumptions by finding out more about the amount you are drinking

Disclaimer The app developer is solely responsible for their app's advertisement, compliance and fitness for purpose. Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by West Lothian Council, and West Lothian Council is not liable for their use.