



Workplace Wellbeing Newsletter: November 2022

Alcohol Awareness Week takes place 18th-25th November and the theme in 2022 is change.

Alcohol consumption occurs in various ways. In 2020/21, four-fifths (81%) of adults in Northern Ireland reported that they drank alcohol. This was higher than in 2019/20 (77%).¹ The cost of alcohol-related harm in Northern Ireland is estimated to be as much as £900 million per annum.²

Alcohol is like any other drug. Using it can affect a person's life in a negative way. That's particularly true if use turns into overuse. Alcohol can affect our mental health and our physical wellbeing, and drinking too much can alter the way we interact with society, colleagues, friends and family.

It's important to stress that lots of people enjoy a casual a drink with friends on a night out or workmates at the end of the day. This isn't unusual and can build connections with those around us. However, when drinking starts to negatively impact our relationships, our work and our finances, that's when we should consider the ways in which alcohol and our lives intersect.

If a person is struggling with alcohol, there are ways to curb its influence. Building knowledge and striking a balance have big parts to play in making a change.

Watch the pennies

Lots of people are feeling the pinch right now, so it may be a good idea to calculate how much you spend on alcohol. When you're working out your

spending, don't forget to factor in the hidden extra costs of drinking alcohol, too. If you tend to go out to drink, there may well be associated costs of taxis, buying rounds for friends and food on the way home. You may be more likely to spend money on ordering in food the next day or on other items as a result of your drinking if you feel hungover and sluggish and not up to doing your usual activities. Be as honest with yourself as possible – it could lead to significant savings.

Stay well, work better

Alcohol can cause absences from work but presenteeism – working while hungover – is a problem, too. It will also often negatively affect business performance. Standards, behaviour and productivity will be undermined by associated poor concentration and fatigue. These can cause significant stress, worry and anxiety for individuals and teams. In the era of widespread remote working, presenteeism is, perhaps, less evident than before but personal underperformance can still occur, however an organisation operates.

Take a break

You can change your relationship with alcohol simply by reducing its presence in your day-to-day routine. Stepping away from the drink for a few days every week, or doing something time limited like Dry January, can be a very effective way of cutting back and giving your body a rest. You could do this on your own or with other people. Taking time off together means you are more likely to stick to your alcohol-free periods and will create opportunities for you to work and socialise with

¹Department of Health (2021) Health Survey Northern Ireland, 2020/21

²Swann launches new alcohol and drug strategy', Department of Health, 7th September 2021

clearer heads. You could even enjoy a soft drink or a non-alcoholic beverage.

Don't link mood and alcohol

It's normal to want to relax after a hard day but, on the other hand, it's not healthy to use alcohol to deal with work-related stress. Relationships and performance are at risk when alcohol becomes a go-to coping method. Alcohol is a depressant and while it can initially improve a person's mood, this will quickly fade. It's crucial to remember that anxiety and depression are more common in heavy drinkers, and heavy drinking can be more common in people living with anxiety and depression.

Get informed and ask for help

Know how much alcohol is in your drink of choice by checking out medical information. The UK's Chief Medical Officers recommend not drinking more than 14 units a week; that's about six pints of lager or a bottle and a half of wine.

Also, don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel you need it, or if you're worried about someone else's drinking. Ask your GP for advice or check out the various resources on the [Inspire Support Hub](#), which is home to alcohol-related self-help programmes and fact sheets.



Information, advice and support

- www.drinkaware.co.uk
- www.drugsandalcoholni.info



International Men's Day – 19th November 2022

International Men's Day celebrates the positive value men bring to the world, their families and communities. The theme for 2022 is "Helping Men and Boys".

Only 50% of men feel comfortable talking about their mental health. You can support the men and boys in your life by reaching out and starting a conversation about mental health and wellbeing.

You can mark International Men's Day in any number of ways. You can host an event to celebrate the men in your life, raise funds for men's health initiatives by taking part in campaigns like Movember or simply do something special for the men or boys you love.

The Inspire Support Hub provides a range of online resources to help you look after your wellbeing.
Visit: inspiresupporthub.org

