

Our work in Wales 2022-23

We are Alcohol Change UK.

Alcohol Change UK is a leading UK alcohol charity, formed from the merger of Alcohol Concern and Alcohol Research UK.

We are not anti-alcohol; we are for alcohol change. We are for a future in which people drink as a conscious choice, not a default; where the issues which lead to alcohol problems – like poverty, mental health issues, homelessness – are addressed; where those of us who drink too much, and our loved ones, have access to high-quality support whenever we need it, without shame or stigma.

The problem is complex, and so the solutions aren't simple. But we're ambitious. Driven by our belief that every person deserves to live a full life free from alcohol harm, we create evidence-driven change by working towards five key changes: improved knowledge, better policies and regulation, shifted cultural norms, improved drinking behaviours, and more and better support and treatment.

This report summarises our work in Wales between April 2022 and March 2023.

Our work in Wales 2022-23

Contents

Welcome	4
Improving support and treatment for everyone.....	6
Making alcohol support services more culturally relevant	6
Tackling inequalities	7
Changing our relationship with alcohol	10
Dry January 2023	10
Offering low alcohol and alcohol-free alternatives.....	11
Improving alcohol policy and regulation in Wales	13
Monitoring minimum unit pricing in Wales	13
Getting our message heard	15
Media	15
Social media	15
E-newsletter	15
Meet our Wales team.....	17

Welcome

Alcohol touches all our lives. Even if we don't experience alcohol harm directly as individuals, we can all see the effects that alcohol can have on people we care about and on our society as a whole.

We know that the reasons people drink heavily are complex and are often linked to other issues – such as current stress or past trauma. We also know that many people face barriers when they seek to address their alcohol problems. That's what motivated us to host our *Opening Doors* conference in March 2023 – bringing together researchers, practitioners and people with lived experience to see how we can bridge the gaps between services and underserved communities. Our consistent message is that people aren't "hard to reach"; we just haven't done enough to reach them yet.

As an organisation, we've been seeking to take ourselves out to people, rather than waiting for them to find us. We've visited community centres and alcohol treatment facilities across Wales, to find out more about what people need and what we can do to help.

We've also been making the case for evidence-based interventions to reduce harm, such minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol. Our research has shown how MUP has removed the largest containers of the strongest, cheapest drinks from the market in Wales – making a significant contribution to changing drinking habits.

There's still a long way to go. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic seems like a distant memory for some people, alcohol-related deaths remain higher than they were pre-pandemic. Looking ahead to the next twelve months, we'll be continuing to work hard to reduce the negative effects of alcohol in Wales, and to make sure that more people who are experiencing alcohol issues can get the support they need.



Andrew Misell
Director for Wales, Alcohol Change UK

"We've been making the case for evidence-based interventions to reduce harm."

Improving support and treatment for everyone

Making alcohol support
services more culturally
relevant.

Improving support and treatment for everyone

Making alcohol support services more culturally relevant



The Welsh Government has rightly recognised by that there is a real need in the field of healthcare to “ensure services are delivered in an accessible, culturally sensitive way for all”;¹ and one of our charity’s aims is to help make alcohol support services more culturally relevant, and therefore more effective, for people from ethnic minority communities.

One key aspect of this is the major role of faith in many cultures. In May 2022 we jointly hosted, with drug and alcohol charity Adfam, an online forum on the theme of *Faith, Families and Recovery*, which was attended by people from various faith traditions, as well as service commissioners and providers.

The attendees heard from Alison Mather of Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) and Iman Atta of Faith Matters, both of whom spoke about the positive and negative roles that faith can play in people’s lives when they are facing substance use issues, particularly if their faith tradition prohibits the consumption of alcohol and/or other drugs. Our hope is that the event has kick-started a journey that will help treatment services have a better understanding of the role of faith in the lives of individuals and families, and help faith organisations better understand alcohol, drug and gambling issues.

In addition, as part of our work with colleagues across the UK – and in particular with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) in England – we have been pleased to produce a short guide to improving alcohol treatment provision for people from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and this is available bilingually in Welsh and English.

“Our aim is that our online event has kick-started a journey that will help treatment services have a better understanding of the role of faith in people’s lives.”

¹ Quote taken from the Welsh Government’s *Anti-racist Wales Action Plan*, 2023.

Improving support and treatment for everyone

Tackling inequalities

Opening Doors: ensuring access for all to alcohol support



In recent times, you may well have heard about the need for a “no wrong door” approach to support. It’s the idea that wherever someone turns up in the system – mental health, substance use, housing, social services – they’ll get the help they need for the issues they’re facing, including for “complex” issues, such as co-occurring alcohol use and mental ill-health.

Knocking on one service provider’s door is supposed to be all that’s necessary. But what if every door seems to be shut?

In line with our commitment to addressing health inequalities, in March 2023 our Wales team hosted our national online conference *Opening Doors*, on the theme of how to better reach some of the people and communities services often fail to connect with, and how we can start to bridge the gaps.

Around 200 delegates heard from a range of researchers and practitioners – as well as from people with lived experience – about how we can all embrace complexity and develop solutions that work for diverse individuals and communities.

Topics for discussion on the day included anti-racism and harm reduction, hearing British Muslim perspectives on British drinking culture, examining interventions to support women with complex needs, and exploring how alcohol shapes experiences of belonging in marginalised groups.

If you missed the event, for a small fee you can access video content from all nine presentations from the day on the Alcohol Change UK website.

Improving support and treatment for everyone



Dan Carden MP and Melissa Rice in conversation with our Wales Director, Andrew Misell, about the roles alcohol has played in their lives and identity. Watch [here](#).

"What an amazing day. The conference was rocking! I gained so much knowledge"

"An excellent conference. So much learning to share with others"

"Great, engaging and very informative with lots of food for thought. A huge thank you to those who shared their personal stories and experiences"

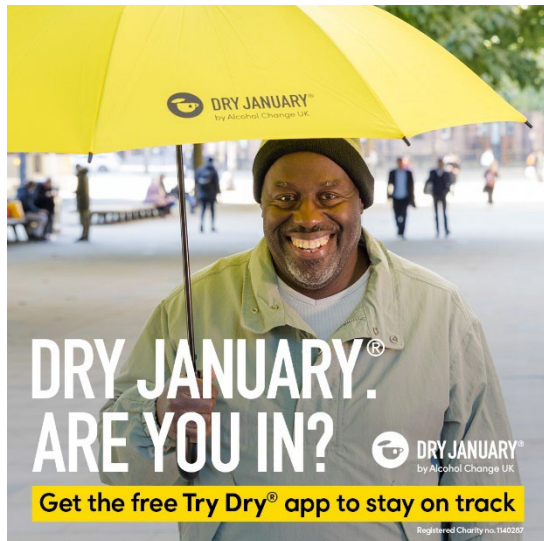
"A long day, yes, but extremely valuable info and knowledge sharing. Thank you so much"

Changing our relationship with alcohol

Dry January® returned this year, bigger and better than ever. As we celebrated its ten-year anniversary, our commissioned survey at the end of 2022 found that one in seven (17 per cent) of UK adults planned to go alcohol-free for 31 days in January 2023.

Changing our relationship with alcohol

Dry January 2023



Dry January® returned this year, bigger and better than ever. As we celebrated its ten-year anniversary, our commissioned survey at the end of 2022 found that one in seven (17 per cent) of UK adults planned to go alcohol-free for 31 days in January 2023.

The benefits of taking a month of alcohol can be huge, with previous research showing that it can lead to lower blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes risk, as well as lower cancer-related proteins in the blood.

Taking a break from alcohol can also relieve anxiety and help you remember that you don't need alcohol to have fun, relax, celebrate, unwind or anything else. It puts you back in control of your drinking.

Crucially, we also know that those who sign up to Dry January® with Alcohol Change UK double their chances of success compared to those who have not joined our official campaign. They have more energy, improved concentration, boosted mood, save money and so much more. And people are catching on too: Dry January® participants were up 34% compared to January 2022.

People taking part in Dry January® get access to all of the free tools and resources from Alcohol Change UK, including our Try Dry app and daily motivational emails. Whether you've never tried Dry January® before, or you plan to come back for more, we hope you'll join us in January 2024!

"The objective of Dry January is not long-term sobriety — it's long-term control. It's about understanding your subconscious triggers, overcoming those, and learning how good it is to not drink. It gives you the power of choice for the rest of the year."

Changing our relationship with alcohol

Offering low alcohol and alcohol-free alternatives



Meeting festival-goers in Newport

The past year as seen another sharp increase in the number of people turning to low alcohol and alcohol-free drinks to help cut back their alcohol intake.

In October 2022, we were pleased to be able to host our "Pub with No Booze" at the Newport Food Festival, offering a selection of 0% abv and 0.5% abv beers, ciders, wines and cocktails free-of-charge to festival goers.

This year we were delighted to have the help of volunteer researchers from the University of South Wales, who interviewed almost 100 people during the day about their attitudes to low-ABV drinks. Encouragingly, even though only 14% of visitors to our stall were regular consumers of alcohol-free drinks, after trying the drinks we had on offer 54% said that they were better than they expected and 38% said that they intended to drink more of them in the future.

To help consumers choose the best low alcohol and alcohol-free drinks, we continue to regularly provide bilingual reviews on our website of new entrants to the market. It now hosts more than 350 reviews, from cider to cocktails, and it has been especially encouraging to see the growing public interest in Welsh alcohol alternatives, and the growth of Wales-based brewers such as Drop Bear to meet this demand.

"Our website continues to be one of the most popular places online to find information about 0.5% abv and 0% abv alternatives to traditional alcoholic drinks and, to our knowledge, it's the only one available bilingually in Welsh and English."

Improving alcohol policy and regulation in Wales

Monitoring minimum unit
pricing in Wales.

Improving alcohol policy and regulation in Wales

Monitoring minimum unit pricing in Wales



It's been more than three years since the Welsh Government introduced minimum unit pricing (MUP) in Wales.

A minimum unit price sets a baseline price below which alcohol cannot be sold, and in Wales this is set at 50p per unit.

Some of the products we looked at in March 2023

The purpose of the measure was to raise the price of the cheapest alcoholic drinks on the market, as these tended to be consumed by heavier drinkers and therefore cause greater harm.

An independent evaluation of the full impact of the measure is currently underway, with publication expected in 2024. In the meantime, we have continued to monitor the alcoholic drinks market in Wales and have spotted some important new trends:

- 3-litre bottles of cider at 7.5% abv (often referred to as "super-strength cider"), commonly purchased by heavy and dependent drinkers, have virtually disappeared as result of MUP.
- The other obvious impact of MUP is on spirits, where the cheapest ones we recorded in 2019 – supermarket "savers" and "basics" brands – no longer appear to be on sale in Wales. They have been replaced at the bottom of the spirits market by what were the supermarkets' next cheapest own-brand spirits.

"We have continued to monitor the alcoholic drinks market in Wales."

Getting our message heard

The media plays an important role in shaping public awareness and knowledge about alcohol consumption and harm

Getting our message heard

Media

The media plays an important role in shaping public awareness and knowledge about alcohol consumption and harm. That's why, at Alcohol Change UK, we see it as a vital role of ours to respond to the many and varied alcohol-related news stories as they appear throughout the year, as well as generating our own news stories.

Social media

Social media is a vital tool for us to share information about alcohol-related harm, and to make forge new connections in Wales.

Our Twitter account, @ACCymru, now has more than 2.5k followers, whilst our UK-wide account has 26.4k followers! Please be sure to follow us on Twitter to receive the latest updates on all things alcohol harm.

E-newsletter

For well over a decade we have, and continue to, publish a free, bilingual quarterly e-newsletter summarising the current issues surrounding alcohol harm in Wales, sent to an engaged supporter base of hundreds of people. Please contact us if you wish to be added to our mailing list.

Meet our Wales team

Our team in Wales may be small, but it is hugely passionate about our work to create a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol.

Meet our Wales team

Our team in Wales may be small, but it is hugely passionate about our work to create a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol.



**Wales Director:
Andrew Misell**

Andrew is Alcohol Change UK's Director for Wales.

He has been responsible for the development and delivery of the charity's work in Wales since 2009.



**Senior Research & Policy Manager:
Mark Leyshon**

Mark also joined Alcohol Change UK in 2009. His role involves identifying and delivering research projects, managing Alcohol Change UK's grant awards, and using strong networks to influence alcohol policy.

Get involved



**We cannot reduce alcohol harm alone.
The more we all work together, the faster
change will happen, and the more lives will be
improved and saved.**

Some people are motivated to support us financially, whether in memory of a loved one, because of their own experiences, or because they share our vision for a society free from alcohol harm.

Some people want to share their own ideas, knowledge and experiences, or to collaborate with us through research.

Some are keen to speak out, to use their voices to help policy-makers to focus on the evidence and to take action.

And some people will have other innovative and creative ideas for making change happen. Our role, wherever possible, is to help people to take action to reduce alcohol harm.

**Find out more and get involved at
alcoholchange.org.uk**

Alcohol Change UK in Wales
Enterprise House
127-129 Bute Street
Cardiff
CF10 5LE

www.alcoholchange.org.uk

@ACCymru and @AlcoholChangeUK

Alcohol Change UK is the operational name of Alcohol Research UK. Registered office 27 Swinton Street, London WC1X 9NW. Registered charity number 1140287. Company limited by guarantee in England and Wales number 7462605