

Delivering Alcohol Awareness Week in your community

About us

Alcohol Change UK works for a society that is free from the harm caused by alcohol. We create evidence-driven change in five key areas: improved knowledge, better policies and regulation, shifted cultural norms, improved drinking behaviours, and more and better support and treatment.

Find out more: alcoholchange.org.uk/

About this handbook

The aim of this handbook is to provide you with some ideas for how to organise a successful alcohol public health campaign in your local area for Alcohol Awareness Week.

What we are offering here are some ideas based on our experience of what has worked well, and suggestions for approaches for you to try.

Acknowledgments

Alcohol Awareness Week would be nothing without its participants and supporters. Alcohol Change UK would like to thank all those who shared their experiences of Alcohol Awareness Week with us – in particular the many individuals in local groups who organised activities for Alcohol Awareness Week and took the time to tell us about them.

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Helping your community to drink more healthily

Alcohol Awareness Week is a public health campaign which is managed and hosted by the charity Alcohol Change UK and supported by local groups and charities across the UK. It can be run with minimal resource in your area as part of your alcohol harm reduction strategy.

Alcohol Awareness Week is a chance to get people thinking about drinking. It's a week of awareness-raising and campaigning for change. It's co-ordinated by us, Alcohol Change UK, but many of the most important activities during the week take place in communities around the country.

This year's campaign takes place from 3-9 July 2023 on the theme of 'Alcohol and cost'.

Why take part in your community?

Informed community

Take this opportunity to provide your community with the information they need to make informed choices about their drinking and the impact it can have on their own health and wellbeing and that of those around them.

Local awareness

This is a national campaign, but why not make it relevant to your local area? Raise awareness of support services that are available on your doorstep, so that more people can access the help or treatment they need.

Constructive conversation

Use this structured campaign to open the conversation about alcohol, challenging stigma and stereotypes, helping to give confidence to those who may be looking to access support.

Create starting points

Learning new information and having a moment to reflect are key steps in deciding to make a behaviour change. For some individuals, your campaign could be the impetus that motivates them to make lasting change.

Getting started

At it's simplest, an alcohol public health campaign can be about creating a display to raise public awareness using posters and resources provided by us. We have some ideas for how you can do this below.

Ideas for if you're low on resource

If you are low on time and resource or need some further inspiration, look no further!

Join the 5,000+ community groups across the UK, including local authorities, GP surgeries, treatment providers, charities and more, to take part in Alcohol Awareness Week using our free digital resources.

Our digital resources will be available from April/May and will be sent to all those who have signed up for the campaign. Here are some more ideas to get you started:

- **Spread the word on social media and elsewhere.** Use our social media images and messaging across your channels and join us in getting people thinking about their drinking.
- **Create a display.** Put our posters on display online and out in the local area. Share them with your local places so they can display them too. Think about displaying where people already gather – venues, bus stops, reception areas and waiting rooms and website landing pages.
- **Create a press release using our template.** Share the messages and the success of your campaign throughout your local media and news. Our template should make this simple to put together, especially if you're looking for some guidance.
- **Point people to our [interactive tools](#).** They provide a variety of ways to get people thinking about their drinking, including: [alcohol and mental health quiz](#), [What type of drinker are you?](#), and our [alcohol and your body map](#).
- **Share a link to the [Alcohol Change UK website](#)** to help those in your community learn more about alcohol, and [about their own drinking too](#).

Community-based approach

If you have more time, you may find a community-led approach offers even greater rewards.

Here are a few tips – based on our experience – about how to set up an alcohol public health community initiative in your local area.

Connecting with your community

There are all sorts of different communities. We've found that some of the best events are aimed at anyone who lives in the local area. This 'place-based' approach can attract a wide range of people who might never normally meet and generate interesting and unexpected conversations.

So, thinking about what alcohol means in your community and considering the best groups to connect with is a great place to start.

Once you've picked your community group(s), it's worth thinking about what might matter to them: what are their interests and concerns, and what would make an Alcohol Awareness Week interesting to them? It might be the chance to get fitter, to get out of some deep-seated habits, or just the chance to get to know the neighbours better.

Setting the right tone

Alcohol can be a sensitive subject, and no one likes to feel like they are being told what to do. So it's worth involving some of the group from the start to set the right tone. People will have different levels of enthusiasm and commitment to the campaign, and need to feel that they can decide what will work for them.

"I assumed it would be preaching about not drinking...but it seems to be far more about bringing the community together."

To attract the widest possible range of participants, you need to be clear from the start what the campaign is about, and what it's not about. The campaign is not anti-alcohol but more about giving us a pause for thought to consider our drinking. All of the resources we offer include positive, non-preachy messaging.

"Not sure if I will keep it going but I will definitely cut down."

Get yourself connected

A campaign needs participants. But how do you find them? Leaflets, posters and social media can help to get you started, but a particularly effective way to encourage people to get involved in a community event is word of mouth: either face-to-face or online, via someone they know and trust. Some people are obvious 'community

connectors', such as a local politicians and radio presenters, and they're often worth approaching. The personal endorsement of a well-known local figure like this can be invaluable.

But it's not all about celebrities. Everyone can be a connector: someone who knows people who know other people.

Many people will be part of existing community networks – such as sports clubs, faith communities and interfaith groups, exercise and weight loss groups. Linking up with established groups like these is much better than trying to create your own network from scratch.

They may not have any specific focus on alcohol issues, but they will be full of people who have experience of the role alcohol plays in their community. If you can present Alcohol Awareness Week to them as an opportunity they can shape according to their own priorities, they may be willing to help you get the word out and attract other people to take part.

Take your time

Building the sort of relationships that form the basis of a successful community initiative can take time.

So, if you're short on time, you might want to focus more on supporting the group to raise awareness of the issues and providing them with some resources that they can share.

If you do get time to work more collaboratively with an existing network, you will also have to factor in time to listen to what's important to them too and continue the dialogue with a view to taking on board some of their ideas in the future.

Expect the unexpected

Campaigns work best when they grow from the ground up. Alcohol Awareness Week is a framework within which all sorts of community-based activities are possible. Some of the unexpected alcohol-free activities we've helped people organise over the years have been:

- walking football
- tea dances
- intergenerational IT sessions
- battle of the bands
- walking tours with poetry readings

These are just a few examples – there are more ideas in the sections that follows, and people in your community will have all sorts of ideas of their own. So, be ready to listen and to try things you didn't expect. In fact, the business of getting people together to talk about what to do, and then doing it, can bring real long-term benefits in terms of

connecting people with those around them – benefits that can last beyond the timespan of any one campaign.

Branch out

There are some places where people expect to come across a public health campaign like Alcohol Awareness Week – such as a pharmacy or a doctor's surgery. These venues work very well, particularly as people are often actively seeking out health information and advice.

But it's also worthwhile looking outside of these local places by bringing your campaign to the attention of people who aren't looking for it at all.

One way of meeting people who aren't expecting you is to show up somewhere unexpected. Think about venues that are popular locally but wouldn't normally be used for a health-related project. One obvious option is a pub or club where people normally go to drink (such as a rugby club). Most licensees recognise their role in the community and are keen to carry it out responsibly. They may also realise that it makes good business sense to improve their offer to moderate drinkers and non-drinkers.

Some ideas for events

The shape of your local Alcohol Awareness Week initiative will depend on what the participants want to do. Here, we'd like to offer a few examples of the types of events that we have found have worked well.

A beer festival with no booze

"Finding tasty alcohol-free beers at the festival made all the difference. Now I can drink with friends and those of us who aren't on alcohol don't feel out of it."

In 2017, we held what we believe was Britain's first alcohol-free beer festival. It was so novel that it was reported in the 'Weird News' section of the *Daily Mirror*. Alcohol-free beers, wines, ciders, and even spirits have become more mainstream since then. Lots of people are quite curious about them, but still a little bit cautious as well. By organising a festival with free samples of a range of drinks, you can help people satisfy their curiosity and overcome their caution. We've found that once people get taste-testing, they're usually pleasantly surprised.

"It's a total surprise how tasty they are. With these drinks, it would be much easier to go alcohol-free."

Again, it's worth thinking about unexpected places to hold your festival: places people gather but wouldn't necessarily expect to come across an initiative like Alcohol Awareness Week. Some possible locations include:

- Established community festivals and events – such a food festival, farmers' market or arts and crafts fair – where you can set up a market stall to offer drinks samples.
- Sporting venues, such a local football or rugby club, where you can catch people prior to the match and at half-time.

Mocktails!

Virgin Mary. Nojito. Mango Mule. This is what we used to have in the days when the only way to get decent alcohol-free drinks was to make them yourself...and it's still great fun. A big part of the cocktail experience is the performance of making and presenting them. So, find some fancy glasses, pick out some interesting ingredients, go heavy on the garnish, and maybe even order some little paper umbrellas. If you're not sure where to start, there are hundreds of recipes online, offering new takes on old favourites. You may be surprised how many of the great flavours of popular cocktails come from the ingredients other than the alcohol.

As with an alcohol-free beer festival, you can set up a mocktail stall at an existing local event or venue. Or you could try incorporating mocktails into a smaller, more intimate social gathering, such as a book club or knitting circle.

Sport for all

Sport can be a great way to look after our physical and mental health, and a great way to socialise and relax. But a lot of us lack the confidence to get out on the pitch and show off our less-than-perfect sporting skills. That's why a number of new sports have been developed in recent years in which many more of us can participate without embarrassment.

One great example is walking football. Invented in 2011, it's football with one simple extra rule: players must have one foot on the ground at all times. This slows the pace and means that the game can be played by mixed teams of any gender, children and adults together, and by people with limited movement. It's hard to think of a more sociable and more inclusive form of exercise! You can play it on more or less any open space. You can make it as competitive or as light-hearted as you like. And all that walking around (and shouting from the sidelines) is bound to make people thirsty, which means you and your alcohol awareness champions can be on hand with alcohol-free refreshments.

Showcasing your neighbourhood

Sometimes the best community alcohol initiatives aren't about alcohol at all. That's because a lot of the reasons people drink aren't really anything to do with alcohol: they're about boredom, habit, stress and worries, loneliness and isolation. One way to address this is to try and inject some positivity into the neighbourhood by demonstrating how many good things are going on that people can get involved in, including your local alcohol public health initiative.

There's been a big movement since the 1990s to focus less on what's wrong in any community and more on what's strong. The truth is that everybody has something to give to those around them, and lots of us are doing things that make our community a better place to be – through our work, our hobbies, our relationships with our neighbours – without necessarily realising what a difference we're making. One approach we've found works well is to simply bring people together – local businesses, public services, charities and community groups – in one place to showcase what they do, in a marketplace of ideas and activities.

Musicians, beauticians, police officers, vicars, Scouts, jewellers, café owners. Whoever they are, they're making the community what it is, and that's a really positive vibe for your Alcohol Awareness Week project to embody.

Exhibitions

Pop-up exhibitions are great for catching people's attention. If a space has changed or something is new, then people want to have a look and see what's going on.

Why not create some pop-up art exhibitions in your community? They can be a real crowd pleaser, as well as being a great conversation starter.

Tea room with a twist

Help people discover new favourite drinks by holding a botanical workshop focusing on tea blends.

Maybe you have a local café, restaurant or shop who could help pull this activity together ?

Summer Olympics

Arrange a family friendly summer Olympics to get people out and enjoying themselves for an alcohol-free activity.

Call on local partners to help with this – gyms, leisure centres, sports clubs! It may not sound high-impact but if you run this ‘tournament style’ it could give people the chance to attend a whole series of activities, that are not alcohol-focused; this all supports with making new routines and for some, learning how to explore social activities without alcohol being a key factor.

Next steps: Get your resources

Throughout the week local areas across the country run events and displays using free downloadable resources provided by Alcohol Change UK. These free printable resources will be available from April/May.

Resources include:

- Posters
- Factsheets
- Social media images and template posts
- Template press release
- List of services where you can signpost people to support
- Pack of ideas for running Alcohol Awareness Week in your workplace

Pick up some great offers in our shop

We also have some great complementary printed resources available in our online shop for you to order for your displays.

- **Our ever-popular scratchcards.** This simple quiz acts as a great conversation starter and helps to tell people if they are at risk of alcohol harm by answering three simple questions (based on the official AUDIT-C tool created by the World Health Organisation). A total score of 5 or more can indicate increasing or higher risk drinking.
- **Posters.** Our Alcohol Awareness Week posters will be available to download for free but we'll also have a set of printed versions ready to go if you're short on time. These will be available in our shop soon.

[Sign up for your free resources.](#) Visit our [online shop](#) to find out more.

Stay in touch

There are many ways to organise Alcohol Awareness Week in your community as there are communities in the UK. We've set out the benefits of running a campaign and some ideas for getting started, but we'd love to hear about your ideas too, and what other communities can learn from your experiences. Send us your ideas, stories, images and videos, so we can get sharing: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk.

Contact us

If you'd like to find out more about running an alcohol public health campaign in your community, please get in touch: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk.

Don't forget to sign up for your free resources:

[Sign up for resources for our alcohol public health campaigns](#)

Thank you!

Alcohol Change UK works to significantly reduce serious alcohol harm in the UK. We create evidence-driven change by working in five key areas: improved knowledge, better policies and regulation, shifted cultural norms, improved drinking behaviours, and more and better support and treatment.

Visit us: www.alcoholchange.org.uk

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