

Factsheet on...

Alcohol

How Big A Problem Is Alcohol?

Alcohol is one of the major lifestyle-related factors that causes poor health in Greater Manchester.

More than 1 in 25 adults are dependent on alcohol and statistics show the UK has one of the highest rates of binge drinking in Europe.

An estimated 17 million working days are lost each year as a result of people missing work due to the effects of alcohol.

Around 6% of road casualties and 17% of all deaths on the road occur when someone has been drinking more than the legal limit.

The public are concerned about the affects of alcohol, particularly relating to crime and disorder. In 2008, a health campaign surveyed over 4,500 Greater Manchester residents and found that 75% were concerned about other people's drunken behaviour, 83% were worried about the impact on children and young people and 45% avoided their town centre at night because of the drunken behaviour of others.

What Affect Can Drinking Have?

Drinking heavily increases a person's calorie intake and is frequently associated with obesity, which in turn leads to increased health risks. Adding 3 or 4 units of alcohol to your usual diet every day would lead to a weight increase of around 4lbs in four weeks.

In the long term, alcohol can contribute to a variety of problems. These include:

- Damage to an unborn child
- Liver disease
- Osteoporosis (thinning of the bones)
- Pancreatitis
- Stomach Ulcers
- Infertility
- Heart disease
- Increased blood pressure
- Stroke
- Dementia
- Brain damage
- Mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety

Alcohol can also lead to an increased risk of a variety of cancers, particularly breast cancer and cancer of the gullet.

Why Does Alcohol Misuse Need To Be Tackled?

Greater Manchester is disproportionately affected by alcohol related harm, with six out of the ten most affected boroughs in England being in Greater Manchester.

There has been rapid growth in hospital admissions related to alcohol and in the impacts on society of excessive alcohol consumption.



The Association of Greater Manchester
Primary Care Trusts

Estimates for hazardous, harmful and binge drinking in Greater Manchester are significantly higher than both the England and North West averages. This is highlighted by Greater Manchester having the highest rates of male and female alcohol related deaths in England.

Greater Manchester has the highest rates of cirrhosis of the liver for any Strategic Health Authority in England and trends in alcohol related hospital admissions show a year-on-year increase in admission rates since 2002.

The social and economic impact alcohol has on a community can be clearly seen in the worse affected areas, so much so that the Greater Manchester Against Crime Strategic Assessment team, has decided to focus, with its partners, on reducing alcohol misuse as a priority.

What is the Greater Manchester Health Commission Doing?

The Greater Manchester Health Commission has strongly endorsed the Greater Manchester Alcohol Strategy.

The Health Commission has carried out work to explore whether a minimum unit price for alcohol would offer a potential solution to the problems caused by alcohol in the region. The work carried out so far has helped stimulate a national debate on this issue and the Health Commission is continuing its work, to investigate how minimum unit price might be implemented in the region.

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