

Alcohol Misuse

Get it Right - PUBLIC HEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE

In April 2009 “A profile of alcohol and health in Wales” was published by the Wales Centre for Health. Key findings included that 1,000 people die from causes attributed to alcohol in Wales each year, with alcohol being a factor in more than four per cent of male deaths.

It also reveals that people living in deprived areas of Wales are three times more likely to die of a cause related to alcohol than those living in the least deprived areas. Figures released in May 2008 showed that 36% of adults reported drinking more than the daily guidelines on alcohol on at least one day in the past week, including 20% reporting binge drinking. Over 50% of road traffic accidents are alcohol related. An estimated 1 in 3 attendees at emergency care departments have consumed alcohol and this rises to 2 in 3 after midnight. 15 per cent of all hospital admissions are due to alcohol intoxication and every year 30,000 hospital bed days are alcohol related.

The Welsh Assembly Government has launched Working Together to reduce harm – the strategy for substance misuse 2008-2018. The RCN fully supports the implementation of the accompanying action plan including the steps to improve health services for those with alcohol problems and improve public education.

In April an RCN commissioned project into the effectiveness of nursing services for people with alcohol problems reported. Services in Cardiff, Liverpool, Belfast, Edinburgh and London were examined. All the projects were evaluated successfully with a high number of followed up referrals to specialised services and lower alcohol consumption from those advised.

In London there was a £1,500 saving to the Trust for each patient screened by Band 7 Alcohol Nurse Specialist and in Belfast there was a reduction of 84 bed days per month which represents a saving of around £20,000.

RCN Wales also believes the Welsh Assembly Government should seek the powers to reduce licensing hours, regulate printed advertising material and control the accessibility of alcohol itself.

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- Pre-registration nurse education should reflect the issue of alcohol misuse.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure the Substance Misuse Plan is fully implemented.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should seek the powers to reduce licensing hours, regulate printed advertising material and control the accessibility of alcohol itself.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure there is a statutory requirement to cover issues of alcohol misuse within the national curriculum. Alcohol misuse services for adolescents should be strengthened.
- There should be a full-time alcohol liaison nurse available in every emergency care department.

