

Alcohol – good or bad?

Scotland has a reputation as a heavy drinking nation and West Dunbartonshire is no different.

There are many positive things about drinking safely as part of social occasions.

Alcohol has an important but complicated place in our Scottish culture as part of community celebrations. It plays a part in most peoples' lives and is viewed favourably by many. Excess drinking is often tolerated, and at times encouraged. How often do we hear 'go on have another ... one more for the road' or 'going for a bevvy'... etc.?

Whisky has an especially unique place as a Scottish product - proudly promoted. Yet when behaviour due to heavy drinking becomes unacceptable the person can be blamed, excluded and considered beyond

help. Intoxicated people and their behaviour in town centres and cities are becoming an increasing concern in terms of crime and fear of crime up and down the country.

Studies tell us that heavy or harmful drinking is contributing to poor health and well-being amongst some people in West Dunbartonshire.

The good news is that if you are worried about your own or someone else's drinking, there is a wide range of support and advice available. This newsletter aims to tell you more about the efforts being made by services in West Dunbartonshire to tackle alcohol problems and to let you know more

about the support and practical help available.

Alcohol problems are preventable - by understanding how much you are drinking and the recommended safe limits you can reduce the chance of experiencing health or other problems - now or in the future.

Many people experience problems or know someone with an alcohol problem - it's nothing to be ashamed of. The earlier you get help the better.

This newsletter contains a variety of contacts to help put you in touch with local help and support services. These are detailed on the back page.

Adding it up!

What is a unit? Common understanding is that 1 unit of alcohol equals 1/2 pint of beer or lager, a small glass of wine or a pub measure of spirits. But wait!

This calculation was made around 30 years ago and is based on beer/lager at 3.5%, wine at 8% and a 25ml measure of spirits. Drinks are stronger now and come in various strengths and larger measures!

For women, the recommended alcohol intake is no more than 2-3 units per day with at least 2 alcohol free days each week. For men, the recommended alcohol intake is no more than 3-4 units per day with at least 2 alcohol free days each week.

Lots of people still think of sensible drinking limits as 14 units per week for women and 21 units per week for men. This used to be the case but was changed back in 1995 to discourage people from thinking it's ok to drink all their weekly allowance at the

same time or to binge drink. Our bodies cannot cope with large amounts of alcohol as it takes the liver approximately 1 hour to break down each unit of alcohol. If you

have had a heavy session of drinking, it's best to avoid alcohol for at least the next 48 hours to give your body time to recover. The only thing that sobers you up is time.



Women

Men



How much can I safely drink?

it's not always easy to ask for help

Lorraine McIntosh, better known as Alice Henderson from BBC Scotland's River City, has had to deal with a variety of problems related to her character's drinking.

Alice has had a problem with alcohol since she was a teenager and this has continued to affect her life as an adult and has also had an effect on her family.

Alice sought help to deal with her alcohol problem through Alcoholics Anonymous, AA (see article on page 4) but this is only one of a range of local services that are available to help individuals and families to deal with alcohol problems.

Lorraine McIntosh says: "I think that it is really important to give people information on where to get help with alcohol problems. I'm glad this newsletter has been produced to help point people in the right direction.

It's not always easy to ask for help, or to find the right kind of support but this newsletter will help to let people know what kind of services are out there and how they can access them."



First appointment?

For many people, their family GP is the first person they would contact for advice, information and support for either their own or someone else's drinking problem.

GPs all have access to a complete list of services that deal with a range of alcohol problems including advice and support for family members and counselling for the drinker. Through discussions with your doctor, you should be able to identify the type of support you need. Your doctor will then be able to help you get this support by referring you to an agency who can best offer this.

Some GP practices have support clinics for patients with alcohol problems in the

surgery. Usually the clinics are run by Practice Nurses who will link in with the doctor where necessary.

Dr Boyd, who runs a GP practice in Dumbarton, says:

"GPs are a good place to start when looking for help with alcohol problems. They are in a good position to make sure you get the right help as quickly as possible by referring you to the most appropriate agency."

How many units of alcohol are in my drink?



440ml can Very Strong Lager or Beer = **4 UNITS**



330ml bottle Medium Strength Lager or Beer = **1.7 UNITS**



1 pint Medium Strength Lager or Beer = **2.8 UNITS**



1 pint Standard Strength Lager or Beer = **2.3 UNITS**



1 pint Strong Cider = **4.5 UNITS**



50ml Port/Sherry = **1 UNIT**



275ml Alcopops = **1.5 UNITS**



35ml measure Gin/Rum/Vodka = **1.4 UNITS**



700ml bottle Gin/Rum/Vodka = **26 UNITS**



35ml measure Whisky = **1.4 UNITS**



700ml bottle Whisky = **28 UNITS**



175ml Glass medium size Wine = **2.1 UNITS**



250ml Glass large size Wine = **3 UNITS**



750ml Bottle Wine = **9 UNITS**

AA and more...

One of the most widely recognised support networks to help people with alcohol problems is Alcoholics Anonymous - an organisation where men and women share their experiences and help each other recover from their alcohol problems.

There are at least 42 AA meetings per week in the West Dunbartonshire area. Most meetings are held in Church Halls or Community Centres. Lists of meeting places can be found at local libraries, community centres and police stations. Anyone with a desire to stop drinking and remain abstinent can attend a meeting.

The AA Helpline is run by volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions or put you in touch with those who can.

But it is not just those suffering from alcohol

problems that need assistance - their families also need support - and that is where Al-Anon can offer help to relatives and friends of problem drinkers.

Al-Anon was started by the partners of AA members around 50 years ago and has built up a strong network of support in West Dunbartonshire. The organisation offers support and understanding to families whether the individual is still drinking or not.

For young people aged 13-19 years who have

been affected by someone else's drinking, help is at hand through Alateen, part of the Al-Anon network.

Margaret C., public information officer for Glasgow, first became involved with Al-Anon when her husband's drinking began to have a detrimental affect on family life.

She said: "He went to AA and I went to Al-Anon and together we worked to get the family up and running again."

it's good to talk

Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA) was established in 1976 and serves the whole of West Dunbartonshire and the Helensburgh and Lochside areas of Argyll & Bute Council.

From our full time bases in Dumbarton and Clydebank and part time outreach station in Helensburgh, our core team of 13 paid staff and 36 volunteers deliver a wide range of services to the 300 new clients we see each year. Although the main service we offer is confidential one to one counselling, we also provide a drop-in social facility, and separate women's, men's, users and stress control groups on a weekly basis. Also on offer are complementary therapies and outdoor activities for anyone with an alcohol problem, their families and friends.

Over the years DACA has been innovative and forward thinking and was the first Alcohol Agency in Scotland to use a range of complementary therapies alongside counselling. Feedback from clients on the combined service show that people who received both counselling and complementary therapy reduced their weekly alcohol use from 132 units to 6 units and number of days alcohol free from 2 1/2 days to 6 1/2 days per week.

Building on our work in local schools we recently launched a Young Persons Alcohol Advisory Project for young people aged 11 - 25 across the West Dunbartonshire area offering alcohol education/prevention and a diversionary programme. Director Cathie Dennett says: "Working in partnership has always been a priority with us as we strive to improve provision at a local level and the quality of life for those experiencing problems. A lot of people

who contact us are those who are concerned about the amount they are drinking and who want to take steps to control or cut down. We also see people who have more severe alcohol problems who require support to stop drinking completely. Quite often, it is family members affected by someone else's drink problem who require our support and a phone call is all it takes."



How can the CAT help you?

A Community Addiction Team (CAT) has been set up in the Clydebank area with £172,000 annual NHS Board investment. It brings together health and social work staff in one location to provide access to a full range of addiction services to residents in the local area.

CATs are designed to be easy for people with alcohol and/or drug problems and their families, to access. The team provides a central point of access to appropriate services and work closely with all other local alcohol agencies.

People concerned about their drinking or someone else's drinking can contact CATs themselves, where they will be offered an appointment for assessment either at home or in a clinic setting, or they can be referred by their GP, social worker or by any other services they make contact with, e.g. housing.

The Team aims to help people make positive lifestyle changes, offer advice and information in relation to alcohol problems and provide a full range of programmes to help individuals and

families who are seeking help.

Programmes are tailored to meet individual needs and can include the following:

- * Full alcohol assessment, including assessment of physical problems as a result of alcohol dependence
- * Supporting people to stop drinking safely at home, including GP or nurse monitoring of physical and medical symptoms
- * Helping people to move towards controlled drinking or abstinence, depending on their individual goals
- * Work on skills to help cope with changes to drinking patterns
- * Support for other members of families affected by someone's drinking

Did you know in Scotland..?

33% of men and 15% of women drink more than the recommended limits of alcohol.

Alcohol is responsible for 10% of Accident and Emergency hospital admissions.

Alcohol related problems cost Scotland £1,071 million annually.

Making the link...

The Lomond Alcohol Liaison Service (LALS) aims to provide an improved response to people with alcohol problems.

The service was set up in 2003 and provides a service to patients attending the Vale of Leven District General Hospital (VOLDGH) and links directly to all local alcohol agencies in the community. It provides specialist support to staff working in the hospital and has set up a hospital wide network of "Link Nurses" to assist in improving the care of those with alcohol problems and to help in communications with other staff.

There is an ongoing tailored programme of training on alcohol to hospital staff. A group programme has also been developed working

with community mental health teams, for those people who have both problems with mental health and alcohol.

Mike Thomson says:

« The aim of LALS is to help patients either directly, or through those working with them, to identify the extent of their alcohol related problems, to advise on how best to deal with these problems and to assist on accessing further help if required.»

What will this mean for people with alcohol problems?

Firstly due to training and support, the hospital staff will be in a better position to provide help with alcohol problems and will have quick access to specialist assessment and advice and follow up if required.

Improving staff knowledge and provision of specialist support will help people access the full range of existing community services for alcohol and related problems in the area in line with good practice.

All under one roof

Blue Triangle Housing Association (BTHA) is working in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council to provide accommodation and support for people aged 16 and over who are experiencing homelessness.

At the 2 projects in Bonhill and Clydebank, residents are allocated a key worker when they arrive. Key workers adopt a holistic approach and work closely with each person to provide an appropriate level of support to meet their individual needs. Help in areas such as budgeting, health (including problems with alcohol and/or drugs), claiming benefits and cooking is available to all residents. Weekly up-dates with the key worker and 6-8 week review meetings involving other relevant agencies that are part of the support of each person also form part of the programme that is provided to each resident. This support is in place with a view to promoting independent living for each person aiming to resettle people in their own accommodation.



A helping hand?

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland, in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council, has developed a new service for people with ARBD (Alcohol Related Brain Damage) to provide a wide range of high quality support services enabling people to live as independently as possible within their own homes and communities.

This innovative new service provides specialist support to people in their own homes enabling people to develop life skills, budget, maintain their tenancy, attend appointments and socialise. Lives that might previously have been chaotic now have purpose; 5 of the people we provide support to have been able to move out of long-term residential establishments, back into their own homes.

John's life, for example has been transformed since he moved to his new home in the spring of 2003. He has been able to revive his interests in fly-fishing and racing pigeons. All of our services are designed and shaped around the individuals concerned and we continually review the support provided with our service users, their family, friends and other professionals involved.

What is ARBD?

Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD) is a little known condition where damage has been caused to brain because of high levels of drinking over a long period of time, usually years.

This combined with vitamin deficiencies usually related to poor diet can contribute to the condition. There is evidence of higher numbers of people with ARBD in Argyll & Clyde and Greater Glasgow NHS board areas - around 300 people in each area. The condition needs specialised treatment and care. ARBD is similar to dementia in the symptoms and behaviours displayed.

Nationally, there has been concern that not enough is being done to meet the needs of those experiencing this condition or their carers. People with ARBD tend to be dependant on alcohol and may not understand the damage caused by their continued drinking. They can often be undetected until the condition is severe.

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Staying stopped!

The Alcohol Problems Treatment Unit at Gartnavel Royal Hospital is a long established service for people with complex problems and needs. It takes referrals from the Clydebank, Old Kilpatrick and Bowling areas of West Dunbartonshire, as well as from GP's and the local Community Addiction Team (CAT), through both routine and emergency appointments.

Medical, nursing, psychiatric and clinical psychology staff work as a team to provide a comprehensive service for people with alcohol and associated mental health problems. Treatments on offer include supporting people to stop drinking safely, along with individual and group therapy for staying off alcohol. Drug treatments are used if required to help people cope with coming off alcohol, and also drug therapy to help prevent people from drinking again. Drug treatments are only used if the person is medically fit.

Consultant Ian Smith explains: "Beyond the period of treatment, we arrange support to help people stay off alcohol, usually through linking back to local, community based agencies. For the majority of people, day treatment is a positive measure in the journey towards recovery.

Our treatments are aimed at alcohol dependency and our unit philosophy is to encourage the goal of abstinence. We expect people to attend sober for

treatment and we monitor this.

As a result of heavy drinking, many of our clients can often have medical problems - especially liver conditions. Our nursing staff provide a link service to the liver unit at the nearby Gartnavel General Hospital and both units work together to help and support people with both medical as well as mental health problems."

And so what else is new?

Here is how Argyll & Clyde Alcohol & Drug Action Team and Greater Glasgow Alcohol Action Team plan to spend extra funding for alcohol:

* Almost £70,000 over the next two years has been allocated by Greater Glasgow Alcohol Action team to the Clydebank area to take forward work to tackle alcohol problems in the area. This is in addition to the £1031 million West Dunbartonshire wide already being spent on specific addiction services from the health boards and West Dunbartonshire Council.

* £350,000 over the next 2 years is earmarked to develop a new alcohol liaison service, which will benefit people across the Greater Glasgow area, including Clydebank. This service will help people in hospitals with alcohol problems be linked into services back in their own community on their discharge.

* £120,000 will also develop projects aimed at earlier intervention for those with alcohol problems in

community and primary health care and workplace settings over the next two years across Greater Glasgow.

* A major re-organisation of addiction residential, rehabilitation, in-patient and day hospital services is taking place across Greater Glasgow alongside the development of Community Addiction Teams. The range of services will support people in Clydebank with alcohol problems who may require specialist treatment.

* Further new developments are also due to go forward in the Lomond Area of West Dunbartonshire. The Argyll and Clyde Alcohol and Drug Action Team have allocated £250 000 to support new service developments for alcohol problems over the next two years for the Lomond area.

Let's have a safer summer

Everyone is aware that Strathclyde Police run drink driving campaigns during the festive period but statistics prove that during the summer months, more people are caught drinking and driving per month than during the festive campaign.

In hot or warm weather, people are liable to drink more and eat less, which can cause the alcohol to be absorbed into the bloodstream quicker, and result in less control of the vehicle.

Figures for drink driving offences had been reducing but over the past year have started to rise again with more women being found to be over the legal limit than ever before. Remember alcohol is absorbed at

different rates in different people and can depend on gender, physical build and the various strengths of the alcohol taken.

The Police are often asked "how much can I safely drink and still be fit to drive?" The answer is simple that the only safe limit is:

NOT TO DRINK AT ALL IF YOU ARE DRIVING.



Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA)
Clydebank 0141 952 0881
Dumbarton 01389 731 456

Alcoholics Anonymous
24hr Helpline 0845 769 7555
General Enquiries 0141 226 2214

Al-Anon / Al-Ateen
0141 339 8884

Clydebank Community Addiction Team (CAT)
0141 562 8800

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland
0141 941 3951

Blue Triangle Housing Association
Bonhill 01389 729789
Clydebank 0141 952 2122

Strathclyde Police
Dumbarton Office 01389 822 000
Clydebank Office 0141 532 3300

The Lomond Alcohol Liaison Service
01389 603921

The Alcohol Problems Treatment Unit
0141 211 3546

National Alcohol Helpline
0800 917 8282



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WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

BBC River City's Alice Henderson

ON FINDING THE RIGHT KIND OF SUPPORT

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WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE
SUMMER 2004

PLUS ALL UNDER ONE ROOF | ADDING IT UP!
STAYING STOPPED! | AND MORE...