About us

Alcohol Concern is a small independent charity. We work throughout England and Wales towards our vision of a world where alcohol does no harm. We help people through information, advice and guidance; help professionals through training, projects and research; and help all of us through campaigning to challenge the drinking culture in our country.

Our vision

Our vision is of a world where alcohol does no harm.

Our mission is to

Help people through information, advice and guidance. Help professionals through training, projects and research. Help all of us through campaigning to challenge the drinking culture in our country.
Our Core Values

**Bravery**

We are brave and honest about a difficult issue that can affect people from all walks of life. We state evidence about alcohol and we are not afraid to challenge the alcohol industry or governments.

**Independence**

We will work with other organisations who genuinely want to reduce harm caused by alcohol. To maintain our independence, we do not accept donations from alcohol producers. We seek to work with local and central government as a vital way of achieving our vision of a world where alcohol does no harm.

**Evidence based**

We promote understanding about the problems that alcohol can cause and the policy solutions. We base our lobbying, campaigns and policy on evidence based research. We source our facts from rigorous peer reviewed academic research, national governments and their agencies, and respected international institutions such as the World Health Organisation.
Our Year in Numbers

- Over 1,500 visits to our website every day
- Two Dry Humour events - proving you can all of the laughs with none of the hangover
- 6,000,000 impressions via Google AdWords
- 1 in 6 Britons attempted a dry January in 2016
- Over 10 mentions in the press, every day
- We’ve worked with 27 local authorities, the NHS and the private sector
- Six new factsheets on alcohol and health for the public and health professionals
Dry January

Alcohol Concern’s flagship campaign Dry January took place again in January 2016. The campaign has continued to go from strength to strength, it was the biggest campaign yet with media mentions, social media engagement and more people attempting to go dry than ever before. A YouGov commissioned survey in early February 2016 indicated that a massive 16% of the adult population attempted to go Dry in January.

The 2016 campaign was the first time we had major corporate sponsor support. Soft drinks company Britvic and restaurant chain Strada were official soft drinks and food partners respectively. The Britvic partnership focused on business to business promotions while Strada was a business to consumer relationship where we offered weekly offers to Dry January participants. The campaign was also supported by Public Health England, NHS Employers and local authorities around the country.

Dry January 2016 also saw the launch of the Dry January App. We partnered with tech company Cyberliver to develop a Dry January app which is featured on IOS and Android. Almost 14,000 people downloaded the app and over 1,800 paid to access premium content. The feedback we’ve received has been excellent and over 1,000 people are still using the app in March 2016.
Fitness focused organisation Jawbone also supported Dry January. They donated a number of fitness tracker devices to Alcohol Concern which we were able to use as early sign up incentives and giveaways. The devices were great for participants to feedback their fitness levels and sleep patterns throughout the month.

Healthy inside and out...

Research in 2015 from Public Health England supported previous findings that Alcohol Concern’s Dry January is an effective behaviour change campaign. The most comprehensive study yet found 67% of participants had sustained reduced levels of drinking six months after completing Dry January 2015, 8% of who had continued to stay dry.

Research from the Royal Free Hospital in London published in November 2015 has also found benefits from a month off alcohol, which we had not initially anticipated, around the positive physiological effects of doing a Dry January. The study of moderate drinkers who had not had alcohol for 31 days, found improvements in concentration and sleep patterns, as well as positive impact on blood sugar levels, blood pressure and the liver.

Six Pack Swap

This year we launched a new summer campaign, the Six Pack Swap. The idea was to create a campaign which didn’t necessitate giving up alcohol, but instead shared some of the information and stats around healthy drinking with a particular focus on the weight gain alcohol can lead to.

It was a six week email campaign, with emails covering topics such as how exercise is like time travel, drinks to unwind with that aren’t boozy and how joining a sports team can actually boost your income too.

It was launched as a pilot campaign, which we expected a few hundred people to take part in as proof of concept, ready for a bigger launch next year. Instead we had over 3000 people sign up, give it their all, and provide some wonderful feedback.

And it seemed to work – the approach of saying that people can drink, but might not want to felt less restrictive to participants, and it seems to have helped some people achieve a lasting change. It’ll be great to see how the campaign grows in future years.

“I have really benefited from joining this campaign and have surprised myself at managing to totally cut out all alcohol whilst my family continued to indulge daily.

“I appreciate all your supportive e-mails and I plan to continue not drinking alcohol indefinitely.

“Thank you from my heart.”

Maria Johnson - August 2015
This year we ran two Dry Humour nights – comedy nights with all the laughter and none of the hangover. We were able to attract some of the biggest names in British comedy, including Jo Brand, Arthur Smith, Richard Herring and Milton Jones.

Comedy and alcohol are frequently paired together here in the UK. Whether live comedy, TV sponsorship or even the highest award at the Edinburgh Festival (now sponsored by a beer brand). Dry Humour nights are our way of showing that this doesn’t have to be the case. After all, 70% of comedians never touch a drop before getting on stage. So if they can perform sober, then the audience shouldn’t need to drink to enjoy it!

These are always fantastic nights of comedy. And they’re a great way to raise much-needed funds for the organisation (over £3000 this year). But, just as importantly, they help people realise that alcohol isn’t necessary to have a good time.

In 2016/17 we are planning events countrywide so that even more people can enjoy a night of alcohol-free comedy.
Zero Alcohol Awards 2016

The Zero Alcohol Awards were created by Alcohol Concern at the beginning of 2015. The inaugural Zero Alcohol Awards were held in the prestigious Barbican conservatory. The awards, designed to celebrate the growing non-alcoholic adult drinks sector and non-drinking experiences, were sponsored by Britvic as part of the wider Dry January campaign.

A total of 38 companies, venues and enterprises were considered for the 8 awards. Final judging was completed by a panel composed of Jackie Ballard, Russell Kirkham representing Britvic, Kate Nicholls from the ALMR, Nikki Culter from Convenience Store magazine, and Hannah Betts, a journalist from the Telegraph.

The awards themselves were held on 25 February at the Barbican, and were attended by around 45 people, ranging from Britvic and Alcohol concern representatives, organisations nominated for awards, other alcohol charities, journalists and food writers. Awards were presented by the judges, and the People’s choice awards were presented by actor and Alcohol Concern supporter, Larry Lamb.

And the winner’s were...

- **Best High Street Bar or Pub Award**: All Bar One
- **Best Multiple Retailer**: Sainsbury’s
- **Best Independent Retailer**: Dry Drinker
- **Best New Product**: Seedlip, Frobishers
- **Highly commended**: Nix&Kix
- **Best Zero Alcohol Initiative**: Morning Gloryville
- **Highly commended**: Dry Bars: The Brink, Redemption Bar, Sobar
- **People’s Choice Award – Overall Winner**: The Alcohol Free Shop
- **People’s Choice Award – Favourite Location**: The Arkle Manor
- **Highly Commended**: Strada
- **People’s Choice Award – Favourite Drink**: Becks Blue
Alcohol Awareness Week 2015

Every November, Alcohol Concern organises Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW). The theme for the 2015 week was ‘The Impact of Alcohol on our Society’, which had a specific focus on the pressures on our emergency services.

The week is used by a whole variety of local alcohol charities, local authorities, schools, universities and NHS organisations to promote healthy drinking messages.

This year we provided over 150 information packs and literature for organisations to use locally.

Working with young people

We have continued to develop our work with young people in 2015/16. We have some very exciting projects at the moment and continue to look for opportunities for young people’s voices to be heard, by decision-makers and in the media and wider society, on alcohol issues.

The Youth Advertising Council (YAAC) was a shortlisted finalist for the Children and Young People Now awards in November 2015. The group continue to meet quarterly to scrutinise alcohol adverts and have made a number of complaints – most recently one against Strongbow Cider in September 2015 which was successfully upheld by the Advertising Standards Agency and gained media attention.

“Being a part of YAAC has helped me to develop analytical skills and made me more aware of problematic advertising and not only in the alcohol industry.

“Winning so many awards and seeing adverts that we have complained about being upheld by the ASA is such a fulfilling feeling.

“Many people do not believe that advertising affects them but that is exactly how you’re supposed to feel as it is a psychological process.”

Chante, YAAC member

Alcohol in the System

With funding from Trust for London we are currently working with young offenders in greater London to better understand the complex relationship between alcohol and offending behaviours, with the aim of improving outcomes for young people in the youth justice system. The project is being co-driven by the young people themselves who will be making policy and practice recommendations to decision-makers later in the year.
It’s the Drink Talking

The ‘It’s the Drink Talking’ project came to an end in June 2015. Funded by Comic Relief since 2012, the project developed a grassroots network of around 500 youth alcohol activists, across England and Wales, who developed local alcohol-focused campaigns and sought to make positive change happen themselves. They included a group of young women from Wales who developed a campaign, film and App tackling alcohol-related sexual exploitation and who were heard in the Welsh Senedd and by local councillors. The project was particularly successful at engaging disadvantaged children with no previous participative experience.

“I got involved with YAAC because I thought it was an interesting angle for campaigning about the problems of underage drinking and gave me the opportunity to network with new people.

“Through YAAC, my networking skills have improved my public speaking skills as well as the ability to be a better critical thinker.”

Oyin, YAAC member
Communities Together

Communities Together is a project (funded by the Big Lottery Fund) which encourages local people to have honest conversations about the good and bad sides of alcohol use in their neighbourhoods, and to develop their own solutions to any problems. It does not aim to discourage drinking altogether; rather to promote a healthy relationship with alcohol, for individuals and for the community as a whole. Communities Together is not based on any idea that Fishguard and Goodwick are places with extraordinary alcohol issues. They’re typical Welsh communities with typical levels of many problems, and also a lot to give in terms of community spirit and the will to make things better.

The priorities from local citizens included; Raising awareness, bringing people together, parents acting responsibly about alcohol and their children.

During 2015/16 there has been a diverse range of activities and projects in which we have become involved, which include:

• The running of The Sound of the Youth – a series of music events for young people, with mocktails, music and a little bit of mayhem!
• Working with students at the local secondary school, Ysgol Bro Gwaun, to help them organise a conference, follow on activities and presentations of their projects on the theme of ‘It’s the alcohol talking’.
• Promoting intergenerational work in Fishguard and Goodwick, for example ICT sessions where 12 and 13 year olds taught and mentored people in their 70’s and 80’s. And our involvement in this work led, in part, to Communities Together acting as the local coordinator for a World Health Organisation pilot study around the Indicators for what makes a community ‘age friendly’.
• Working with a local community theatre group to devise, script and perform a show – ‘It’s the Drink Talking’ put on, to a nearly full capacity audience, in February 2016.

Getting our message across in the media

Getting our messages out to different and new audiences is vital, which is why we regularly speak to national newspapers, broadcasters and magazines about alcohol issues. As well as approaching media outlets proactively, our press team are always prepared to response reactively to new reports or figures around alcohol.

2015/16 was the biggest year for Dry January coverage, with over 1,500 pieces of UK media coverage. We also had our biggest year yet for international press, with 2,085 global media mentions. Media milestones also included the Chief Medical Officer publishing the latest guidance on recommended alcohol limits in January. We ensured we were prepared with a reactive comment as well as briefed spokespeople to be interviewed on the day, which included a live interview and debate on the Channel 4 evening news.

Our social media channels have also continued to grow, our Twitter page has seen a 30% increase in followers, and since the re-launch of our Facebook page in April 2015 we’ve seen an 89% increase in page likes. In 2015 we published a series of factsheets which focused on alcohol and health. The six factsheets looked at the link between alcohol and cancer, breast cancer, depression, diabetes, dementia and hypertension. The release of the alcohol and breast cancer factsheet made it on to the front page of The Mirror in July 2015. In October 2015 we were also shortlisted for PR Team of the Year at the annual Charity Times Awards.
Building the evidence base

A report from Alcohol Concern Cymru released in March 2016 highlighted the extent to which cheap booze is available on high streets - emphasising the need for a minimum unit price (MUP) for alcohol. The report described the findings from a snapshot survey of supermarkets and off-licences in six towns and cities across Wales. The survey found alcohol on sale for as little as 15.5p per unit, meaning that more than 14 units – the Chief Medical Officers maximum weekly recommended limit – could be purchased for little more than £2.

Throughout 2015/16 the factsheets we published on the link between alcohol and health conditions such as diabetes and dementia were also sent as briefings to MPs and have been used in the House of Commons to inform and influence debates.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm

Alcohol Concern continues to provide the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm. During the year we supported the APPG to undertake an Inquiry into the impact of alcohol on the emergency services, including coordinating two expert inquiry sessions and the collation of written submissions. The Inquiry report is due for publication later in the year.

Alcohol Health Alliance

Alcohol Concern is a leading member of the Alcohol Health Alliance (AHA) which has continued to grow, and now has 46 members. The AHA Policy and Advocacy Manager is based at Alcohol Concern. The AHA commissioned, for the second year running, a national public opinion poll to inform its advocacy and campaigns work. The results show that the British public are firmly in support of some of the most effective policy interventions:

- Over 77% support a lowering of the drink drive legal limit.
- 86% believe it is important to know how alcohol can affect health, with 81% of the public supporting alcohol labels which include health information.

The AHA has supported Peers with their Private Members Bills in the House of Lords, supported MPs in debates around alcohol and older People, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and children of problem drinkers as well as tabling a number of parliamentary questions throughout the year. This work translates into our continued efforts to promote evidence-based policies to reduce the damage caused by alcohol-related harm.
The event and by association, the work of Alcohol Concern, gained attention on social media and more widely on the internet, especially on the day of the awards. A number of the winning organisations have also been making use of the awards on their websites and when promoting their products, which shows they are valued as an endorsement. This attention and use of the Zero Alcohol Awards branding will now be built on, and we plan to improve the scope and impact of the awards next year. Additionally, there has been some interest from local authorities in creating a localised version of the awards, which could help boost promotion and respect for alcohol-free alternatives to a wider audience.

Our conferences

We held two conferences in 2015/16. Alcohol Concern’s Annual Conference took place during Alcohol Awareness Week in November 2015 in central London. Rt Hon Mike Penning MP was the keynote speaker and we heard from members of the Fire, Police and NHS on the impact of alcohol on their services.

Alcohol Concern Cymru held their annual conference in September 2015 in Cardiff. The day centred on alcohol in pregnancy. The Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Ruth Hussey spoke at the conference and highlighted that there’s no safe limit of alcohol to drink for pregnant women, which gained a great deal of media attention on the day.
Training and advice

This year we’ve worked with many organisations including 27 local authorities, the NHS and the private sector to provide support and training on alcohol-related issues. We’ve also worked with charities, young people’s services and academic institutions.

After two years the original Blue Light training came to an end in 2015. Following the success of this pilot, 12 local authorities have commissioned further Blue Light training for their areas. We launched a new Blue Light and families initiative with Adfam in November 2015 which looks at supporting family members to respond to change resistant drinkers. 16 local authority partners are taking part in the project with workshops being run around the country and attended by family workers, carers and family members. For the first time in our training history, we held training for our first Blue Light Open training course, which allowed people to book and attend our training on an individual basis. This London pilot proved popular and further training days are now being organised in other cities.

This year also saw the start of a Police and Crime Commissioner funded project, looking at reducing the incidence of, and burden from, street drinking and to improve the interventions provided to street drinkers themselves. We’re working with eight Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to support the development of national guidance on tackling street drinking.

We have also increased our engagement with the private sector by providing workplace training and workshops. We have attended staff Wellbeing fairs for Lloyds of London and the Natural History Museum.
A big thank you!

We could not have achieved so much without

**Our staff in 2015/16**

- Andrew Misell – Director, Wales
- Marc Mordey, Project Manager, Fishguard and Goodwick Communities Together
- Cara Barrett – Press and Communications Manager
- Charlene Orr – Office and Training Manager
- Craig Beadle – Fundraising, Digital and Communications Officer
- Emily Robinson – Deputy Chief Executive
- Jackie Ballard – Chief Executive
- Laura McLeod – Policy and Advocacy Manager, Alcohol Health Alliance
- Mark Leyshon – Senior Policy and Research Officer, Wales
- Madeline Mosse - Senior Trusts Fundraising Officer
- Shumita Rahman – Office Administrator
- Steve Curtis – Youth Participation Officer
- Tom Smith – Head of Policy

**Our donors and funders**

- Tudor Trust
- Trust for London
- Big lottery
- Postcode lottery
- Garfield Weston
- The Rothschilds Trust
- The John Mason Family Trust
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Awards for All
- CRUK

**Our consultants**

- Lauren Booker, Mark Holmes, Mike Pierce, Mike Ward, Gary Wooten

**Our ambassadors**

- Alistair Campbell
- Rory Coleman

**Our President**

- Professor Sir Ian Gilmore

**Our volunteers**

- Penelope Binnie
- Nina Dipboye
- Hannah Lambalot
- Megan Elwell
- Beth Lehlback at IES

**People who have helped us**

- Public Health England
- Olswang LLP
- Behaviour Change
- The Media Trust

**Companies**

- Lundbeck
- Merck Serono
- Britvic
- Strada
- Cyberliver

**Friends of Alcohol Concern**

- Fran Kidd
- Helen Shorey
- Diana Gill
- Moira Duncan
- Josey Farringdon
- Daljit Sanghera
- Tim Jones
- Richard Carrick
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- Layla Wilkinson
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- Daniel Carter
- Thomas Harvey
- Natasha Clark
- Kim Jacks
Make a donation

Making a donation to Alcohol Concern is simple. Whether you’d like to make a regular or one-off donation, to give in memory of a loved one, or support us through a legacy gift, we appreciate every single penny.

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Or post a cheque to:

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