



Alcohol's Harm to Others: When *Their* Drinking Becomes *Your* Problem!

Alcohol Awareness Week aims to get people thinking and talking about alcohol and how it affects us as individuals, families, communities and a society. By encouraging people to examine alcohol-related issues and how they impact on all of us, we hope that it will stimulate conversation and debate and help to bring about a positive change to our harmful relationship with alcohol in Ireland.

This year's theme is "**Alcohol's Harm to Others: When *Their* Drinking Becomes *Your* Problem!**" specifically highlighting the following KEY areas:

- Family problems
- Assaults, Crime & Anti-social behaviour
- Passengers travelling with a driver under the influence of alcohol
- Workplace accidents and loss of productivity

It will also emphasise the importance of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, due to its potential to reduce these negative effects through its broad range of evidence-based policy measures.

Who can take part in Alcohol Awareness Week?

This is an excellent opportunity for all individuals and many different organisations, from local to national level, to contribute to raising awareness and increasing understanding of this very important issue for Irish society.

Local Authorities, Charities, Community & Voluntary groups, Treatment Service Providers, Schools, Colleges, Universities and businesses etc. are all warmly welcomed to participate.

For full participation criteria click [here](#).

What's happening during Alcohol Awareness Week?

It is up to individual organisations to decide what activity suits them best within the broad theme of *Alcohol Awareness Week*. There will be a number of national events taking place, but contributions can also be very simple and determined by your own priorities and resources, such as what links with your own work, or will have an impact in your local community or workplace. To facilitate wider engagement in communities, activities are encouraged right throughout the full month of April. Every event registered will be listed in an *Alcohol Awareness Week* calendar available on participating websites. For some ideas and suggested activities click [here](#).

How do I get involved?

Click [here](#) to register your event for *Alcohol Awareness Week*. Download the registration form, insert your details and forward to info@alcoholforum.org. For further information or assistance please contact 0749125596, email info@alcoholforum.org or see www.alcoholforum.org

Who is organising Alcohol Awareness Week?

Alcohol Awareness Week is being co-ordinated by a stakeholder group of organisations concerned about and working to reduce alcohol-related harm in Ireland. [Alcohol Forum](#) is acting as lead agency for 2014. [Alcohol Action Ireland](#), [Drugs.ie](#), Greater Blanchardstown Response to Drugs, the [Health Service Executive](#) (HSE) and the [Royal College of Physicians of Ireland](#), support Alcohol Awareness Week 2014.



Alcohol's Harm to Others

When *Their* Drinking Becomes *Your* Problem!

The theme of *Alcohol Awareness Week* focuses on and seeks to enhance the increasing recognition that alcohol harm not only affects the individual drinker, but also affects others around the drinker including family members, friends, co-workers and the wider community.

Harms to others can range from minor to serious harms, which may be due to a one-off incident or recurring incidents. Types of harm include injury, assault, traffic and workplace accidents, child neglect, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, harassment and damage to property.

The harm experienced by the drinker due to their own drinking is only part of the story of alcohol related problems in Ireland. The debate on the impact of alcohol-related harm - and the policy measures needed to address these harms - needs to fully encompass the far-reaching negative effects of the drinking behaviours of others on families, workplaces and communities.

The General Population

Alcohol's harm to others is a serious problem in Ireland. Research and surveys have revealed that many people have had first-hand experiences of the negative consequences from other people's drinking.

A national survey on alcohol-related harm in the community, carried out by Alcohol Action Ireland, showed that, overall, about six in ten people said they were negatively affected in some way by someone else's drinking, with the wide range of negative consequences including everything from being kept awake at night to being threatened. Alcohol is also one of the main factors in criminal behaviour in Ireland and the cost of alcohol related crime in Ireland was estimated to be €1.6 billion in 2007.

Road accidents caused by drink driving remain a serious issue and not only result in death and injury to the driver who was under the influence of alcohol, but to their passengers, other drivers and pedestrians. The serious injuries that follow can result in lifelong disability with an enormous personal cost and costs to society.

Impact on Family and other Relationships

In dealing with the problem drinking behaviours those closest to the drinker can experience various levels of stress which at times can be overwhelming due to the frequency

of harmful use or in the case of addiction it can be extensive due to cumulative family, financial, health and relationship problems. In the long term this stress can be damaging to family members' own health resulting in illness and/or significant mood changes thus affecting their ability to function/parent, resulting in their inability to enjoy and maintain relationships leading to a general loss of their quality of life. Although not often publicly visible, alcohol's harm to others within the family can also have very serious consequences, with children the most vulnerable. For a child, harmful parental drinking can shape their every moment from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed.

Issues can include a lack of adequate meals and clean clothes to - at the more serious end of the spectrum - children being physically hurt, emotionally abused or frequently exposed to arguments and fights including witnessing hostility/violence between parents. In later years such children often describe the "bad atmosphere" that they regularly felt in their family due to problem drinking. Alcohol continues to be a prevalent factor in cases of child neglect and abuse in Ireland.

The voice of Irish children was heard when the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's extensive survey on the effects of parental alcohol use on their lives showed that one in eleven young people - more than 100,000 children - said that parental alcohol use affected them in a negative way.

The Workplace

High-risk alcohol consumption can have a short and long-term effect on employee work performance, including absenteeism, accidents, poor decision-making and damaged customer relations.

The cost of alcohol related harm in the workplace in Ireland has been estimated to be over €500 million, with the loss of output due to alcohol related absenteeism some €330 million and the cost of alcohol related accidents a further €197 million.

This excludes alcohol's harm to others as a result of someone else's drinking and someone's ability to do their job can be very negatively affected due to a co-worker's drinking, including impacting on their ability to do their own job and leading to them working extra hours to compensate for a colleague.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill

A key focus of *Alcohol Awareness Week* will be the Government's proposed Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, due to its potential to reduce alcohol-related harm in Ireland.

What is the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill?

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill will contain a package of measures designed to tackle our harmful relationship with alcohol, reducing alcohol consumption and the related harms.

The measures proposed for inclusion in the Bill were announced by Government in October 2013 and are based on the recommendations of the Steering Group Report on the National Substance Misuse Strategy, which was published in February 2012.

Though it may seem strange to many, particularly given the high-profile nature of our harmful relationship with alcohol, this marks the first time that alcohol misuse has been addressed as a public health issue by an Irish Government.

To read more about the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill see alcoholireland.ie/publichealthbill

Why is it needed?

Alcohol-related harm in Ireland currently claims three lives a day and costs the State an estimated €3.7 billion annually, putting a particular strain on our already overburdened health services, where 2,000 beds are occupied by people with alcohol-related illnesses every day.

Alcohol also plays a major role in a wide range of other very serious issues for Irish society, such as crime, suicide, self-harm and child welfare. The harm that is caused by our drinking extends far beyond the individual who is drinking, to impact on families, their own or other people's, communities, schools, hospitals and businesses throughout Ireland.

At an individual level, the majority of Irish drinkers are still drinking in a harmful manner. Our per capita consumption is 11.7 litres of pure alcohol per person aged 15 and over (which equates to a bottle of vodka each every week), a situation that is exacerbated by our unhealthy drinking patterns, particularly the prevalence of binge drinking.

To find out more about alcohol-related harm in Ireland see alcoholireland.ie/facts

This information on the Alcohol Bill is courtesy of Alcohol Action Ireland

What will the Bill contain?

The measures proposed for inclusion in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, brought forward by Minister Alex White and the Department of Health, address the key areas of alcohol-harm reduction, including the pricing, marketing and availability of alcohol.

Among other measures, the bill will provide for:

- The introduction of minimum pricing
- Regulation of the marketing and advertising of alcohol
- Health labelling of alcohol products
- Enforcement powers to be given to Environmental Health Officers in relation to sale, supply and consumption of alcohol products

For detailed information on the measures proposed see alcoholireland.ie/measures

What can you do?

The proposed measures do not yet include important aspects of the Steering Group Report recommendations, such as a ban on alcohol sponsorship of sports (which is to be further examined by a Working Group) and the commencement of Section 9, which would ensure the structural separation of alcohol from other goods in mixed retail outlets, such as supermarkets. We will continue to campaign for the introduction of these critical measures.

However, even those measures which are proposed to be introduced as part of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, such as minimum pricing, are by no means guaranteed and our politicians are subject to intense lobbying by the alcohol industry, which will use all its financial power - and the influence which that affords it - to resist all public health measures that would reduce alcohol consumption and, therefore, represent a threat to its profits.

We would greatly appreciate your support for the campaign to introduce evidence-based policies that will significantly reduce the burden of alcohol-related harm on our society, improving health, safety and wellbeing for all.

Additional information on how to support this Bill will be available on the following websites:

[Alcohol Action Ireland](#), [Alcohol Forum](#), [HSE](#), [Drugs.ie](#), [Royal College of Physicians of Ireland](#)



Date for Your Diary

National Alcohol Conference

As part of AAW 31st March – 4th April 2014

"ALCOHOL'S HARM TO OTHERS"

When their drinking becomes your problem!

Wednesday 2nd April 2014

National Conference Centre Dublin

Half Day Conference 8.30am – 1:00pm

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Prof. Robin Room: Director of the Centre for Alcohol and Policy Research at the University of Melbourne and advisor to the World Health Organisation since 1975 – "Alcohol's Harm to Others".

Prof. Moira Plant: Director of the Alcohol and Health Research Unit and Professor of Alcohol Studies at the University of the west of England - Bristol. Her specialist subject is "Women and Alcohol Related Harm".

Dr. Helen Mc Monagle: Rehabilitation co-ordinator with the Alcohol Forum – "The impact of Alcohol Related Brain Injury on the Family and Society".

Dr. Michael Byrne: Head of Student Health Department, UCC- "University College Cork: Tackling Alcohol Related Harm"