

# Know your units

Community Pharmacy  
**Living Well**  
Campaign



**The ‘Know your units’ campaign aimed to increase awareness of the UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines of no more than 14 units per week and the health risks associated with drinking alcohol in excess of these guidelines. The campaign ran throughout February and March 2024.**

The information used to develop this report is from our submissions of pharmacy team evaluation surveys from 97% of Living Well contracted community pharmacies.

Evaluation figures are an estimation provided by contracted community pharmacies.

**Over 59,300 patients** were engaged through 511 pharmacies on campaign messages.

**Over 55,900 leaflets** were distributed.

**Over 43,550 unit calculator wheels** were issued.

**389 pharmacies reported the public's feedback to the campaign to be positive or very positive.**

**468 pharmacies** felt campaign resources supported them to answer queries or know where to signpost patients to.

**The main age groups provided with campaign information were those aged 31-50 and 51-60 years old.**

The main queries addressed were in relation to **units** and **weekly drinking guidelines**.

**221 pharmacies** handed a leaflet to patients they knew could benefit from it.

**133 pharmacies** referred patients to their GP.

**28 pharmacies** referred patients to a community or voluntary service.

**30 pharmacies** helped patients complete an Alcohol MOT (brief intervention) for harmful or hazardous drinking.

**442 pharmacies** felt the campaign helped to support their pharmacy team's health and wellbeing.

### How did pharmacy engage?

- 55** Via their delivery driver
- 79** Via social media or their website
- 142** Applied stickers to prescriptions
- 284** Provided leaflets alongside prescriptions
- 311** Verbally informed patients

### Number of pharmacies that provided campaign information to the following:

- 138** Housebound
- 204** Those living in poverty or deprivation
- 232** Young families
- 253** Elderly
- 253** Socially isolated
- 306** Those with long term health conditions
- 380** Those with drug or alcohol addiction issues

“Patient presented addicted to sleeping tablets and over consuming wine on a daily basis. We referred them to their GP and weekly dispensing of prescriptions was recommended. GP also referred the patient for alcohol dependence treatment. It was a positive intervention and patient was able to access help.”

“We worked with the local Men's Shed and presented on ‘Know your units’ which was very educational and fun for the group. Many of the men spoke afterwards and they had a range of queries about themselves and their family regarding alcohol.”

“A patient spoke to me about his alcohol consumption as he was not sure of the units he was drinking. Using the calculator wheel I was able to show him the amount of units he was drinking each day. This surprised him as he just thought a few beers each night was no harm. It opened his eyes to the risk he was putting himself at as he had started to gain weight. He was very thankful for our intervention and help.”

“A patient who picked up a unit calculator wheel thought it was brilliant and said she was bringing one home to her parents. She was worried about their alcohol consumption. The following week she was in the pharmacy again and reported that the wheel had been a great help and had led to reduction in alcohol consumption.”

“A patient was prescribed metronidazole. We advised to avoid alcohol whilst taking this antibiotic. Whilst in consultation, the patient realised they often exceeded their weekly alcohol units. This interaction was an opportunistic way to discuss their alcohol intake and the wheel was a novel way to communicate about safe limits. The wheel worked well in conjunction with the information booklet.”

“We counselled a young socially isolated farmer regarding the dangers of his weekly binge drinking and the damage to his health and wellbeing.”

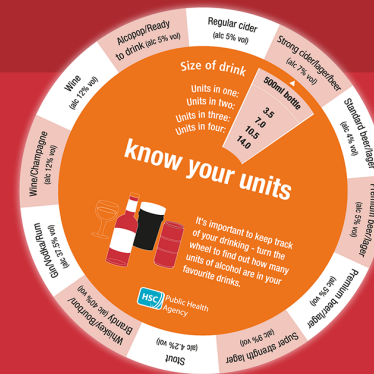
“A customer was amazed with the unit calculator wheel and began to open up about drinking excessively. They were unaware that they had slipped into a cycle of drinking. They took action to remedy this following the consultation.”

“Patients found the unit calculator wheel really helpful and informative and were asking if they could take multiple wheels home with them to give to family and friends.”

“A patient approached us as we were putting up the poster. He never realised the amount of alcohol he had been drinking was so bad. He came back in a few weeks later saying he had visited the GP and had started on medication for high blood pressure. The GP also told him to reduce his alcohol intake. He wanted to thank us, as he wouldn't have known any of this without the chat with our counter assistant.”

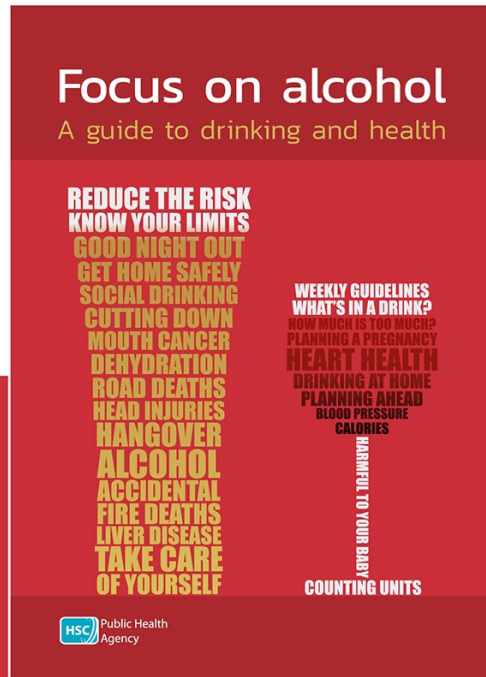
“The most surprising information to many of our patients was the number of calories in the alcoholic drinks they consume. This was a hot topic for conversation!”

# Get to know your units



“I asked those who had signed up to the smoking cessation service over the last two months about their drinking habits, as patients often smoked at the weekend while having a few drinks. Many people did not know what a unit of alcohol was and their knowledge definitely improved as a result of the campaign.”

“Local alcohol addiction is a big issue. We worked with a local community group with a focus on support, and referrals were made to an addiction charity.”



“A man was surprised to discover that 14 units could be as little as five pints and that this was recommended for a whole weeks intake. He was consuming at least double that (especially at the weekend). He decided to reduce his alcohol intake.”

“One patient saw our display and this prompted him to ask for a private consultation with a pharmacist. During this chat he revealed his excessive drinking is having a severe impact on his family relations and his mental wellbeing. He had been to the GP but felt he was not listened to. We referred him to a local counselling service because he told us his depression was getting worse and he was struggling to cope. He has promised to keep in touch with us so that we can encourage his progress.”

“On handing out medication to a weekly prescription patient, I took the opportunity to discuss the ‘Know your units’ campaign and offer them a unit calculator wheel. This led to a more detailed discussion. They were not aware of how many units a week they were consuming, but after showing them the wheel and doing a calculation with them it highlighted that their consumption was in excess of the recommended weekly number of units. The patient accepted that they had a problem and said they would seek advice and help from their GP.”

“A gentleman confided in me that he only had five cans of beer each night, but when he read the leaflet he thought it might be too much. I explained that he was correct; regular drinking was causing him to easily exceed his weekly amount of alcohol units. I explained that his drinking was habitual and that he needed to reduce his alcohol intake and reduce how often he consumed it. He accepted this and has been reducing his intake.”

“A patient, who is homeless and uses addiction services, found the wheel and booklet very interesting . They got into conversation at the hostel they stay at and came back a few days later to ask for a bundle of the wheels to take into the hostel and distribute.”

“I asked a patient about his social drinking. They said that in the evening they would have a couple of bottles of beer, then a bottle of wine with dinner and maybe a couple of brandies. They said this was every night. We worked out a rough calculation of about 18 units daily. He had no idea of the potential health risks involved.”

“A final year university student mentioned that they were finding it difficult to concentrate and get assessments done, as they were out binge drinking and socialising with friends a lot of the time. They were informed of the ‘Know your units’ campaign and were given an alcohol units wheel alongside an information leaflet. They were counselled on the appropriate weekly units, as well as the potential health and monetary savings. They seemed very optimistic and willing to 'give it a try' in order to help them with their studies, etc.”

**122 pharmacy staff**  
attended a bespoke webinar  
**'Alcohol awareness and  
brief interventions'**

Delivered by ASCERT.  
Facilitated by NICPLD.

“It was also great to see examples of a brief intervention as it can be a sensitive subject to talk to people about.”

“The section on brief interventions was excellent, particularly the video examples of a good and a bad intervention.”

“I can use what I have learnt to identify people with potential alcohol misuse disorder. I have the tools and materials available to make people think about their alcohol habits and how to generate conversations about their drinking. I have the knowledge and materials to help support people to take the next step.”