

Community Pharmacy
Living Well
Campaign

Get to know your units

To reduce health risks from alcohol,
drink no more than 14 units a week.



The ‘Know your units’ campaign aimed to increase awareness of the low-risk drinking guidelines and the health risks associated with drinking alcohol in excess of these guidelines.

The campaign ran throughout June and July 2026.

The information used to develop this report is from our submissions of pharmacy team evaluation surveys from 95% of Living Well contracted community pharmacies.

Evaluation figures are an estimation provided by contracted community pharmacies.

Campaign overview



Over 44,500 alcohol unit calculator wheels were handed out



449 pharmacies felt campaign resources supported them to answer queries or know where to signpost patients to



405 pharmacies felt campaign resources helped support the health and wellbeing of the pharmacy team



390 pharmacies reported the public's feedback to be positive or very positive



29 pharmacies promoted Northern Ireland Alcohol Awareness Week



Campaign overview

The main queries were in relation to **alcohol units, binge drinking, how to reduce your risk, alcohol addiction, alcohol and weight, and short and long-term risks of drinking too much.**

Number of pharmacies that provided information to the following groups:

- ♦ **354 to people experiencing drug or alcohol dependence**
- ♦ **308 to older people**
- ♦ **303 to people with long-term conditions or their carers**
- ♦ **232 to socially isolated people**
- ♦ **222 to young families**
- ♦ **185 to people living in poverty or deprivation**
- ♦ **172 to people of ethnic minorities**

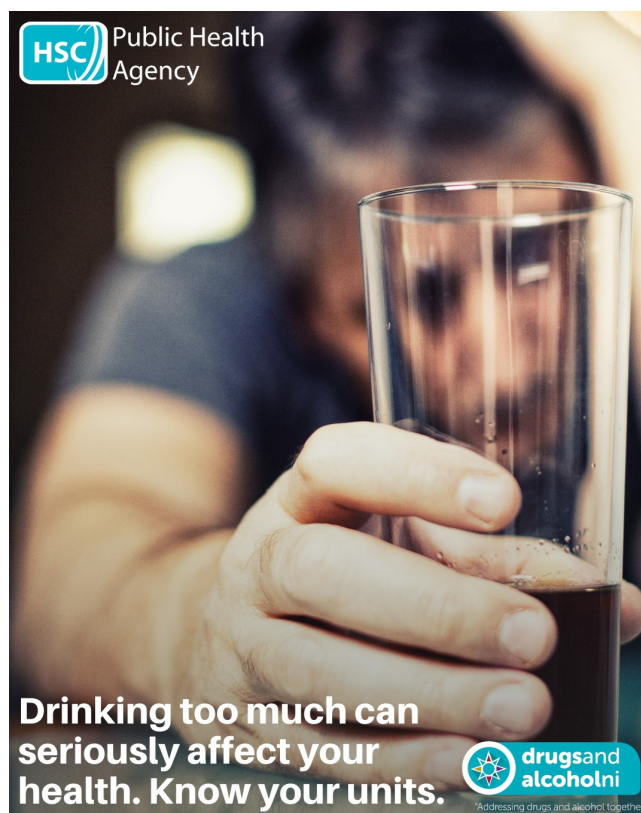


Patient stories

“Many of the patients who self-selected the ‘Know your units’ wheel were very impressed with how handy the wheel was to use to work out the alcohol units. They used it as a tool to engage with the pharmacist about drinking as sometimes this can be a taboo subject to bring up and the campaign made it easier to broach the topic. They also felt that they would now pick alcoholic drinks with lower units so they could still enjoy the same number of drinks, for example a stout vs a lager.”

“I was able to inform and advise a young man about the danger of consuming alcohol before swimming as he was going on holidays and just happened to ask about sun cream.”

“Recently an elderly gentleman approached pharmacy staff asking to speak to a pharmacist. He explained that he had seen the campaign. He had selected the unit calculator wheel and was worried about his alcohol intake. When counselling the patient, it became apparent that he had been drinking too much since his wife had passed away. We explained the harmful effects that alcohol can have and signposted him to where he could get appropriate help to cope with his recent loss.”



“The ‘Know your units’ campaign gave a good opportunity to have a chat about a subject that otherwise would be hard to instigate. I felt people were happier to engage with the visuals and the wheel which then opened up conversations about alcohol consumption.”

“A patient came into pharmacy concerned about his drinking habits. The promotion of the Living Well ‘Know your units’ materials within store prompted him to have a conversation about it that he may not have had on another day. This provided us with the opportunity to support the patient and signpost to the correct support outside of the pharmacy also.”

“A female customer told me she would have a glass of wine every night after dinner. I explained the number of units that equated to and she was shocked. I explained the benefits of reducing intake and advised her to set a target of not having wine Monday to Thursday and enjoying it at the weekend. She said she would give this a go. She called in about a month later to say she has reduced alcohol consumption to four nights per week and is finding it ok.”

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“We had several patients on our weight loss program who consumed more than the safe weekly unit recommendation. We were able to couple in the alcohol reduction advice with the nutrition advice and the patients had a fantastic outcome both with their weight loss and also as a result of their lifestyle change to maintain weight loss. They had dramatically reduced alcohol intake as part of their new lifestyle and plan to continue this long term. These patients reported a significant improvement in their mood, energy levels and relationships with family, and put it down to the big reduction in alcohol intake.”

“I spoke to a social worker who was carrying out a talk for young people about alcohol. I was able to provide leaflets and the unit calculator wheels to help with engagement. I also offered to provide support for this talk and to the young people if they wanted more information.”

“Our team had many conversations with customers who had never heard of them term 'binge drinking'. We were able to provide information on what this means, how to calculate alcohol units and avoid binge drinking.”



“A man collecting a prescription saw the leaflet and enquired about the recommended units’ guidelines. He said he was drinking more to cope with stress. I was able to suggest alternative coping strategies such as exercise, and recommend further support in the area.”

“I counselled a patient with bipolar disorder about her binge drinking. She said that she used alcohol to block out the dark thoughts she experiences during a depressive phase. I explained that alcohol is a depressant and would prolong the depressive phase. I signposted her to support groups and useful online resources and also encouraged her to try exercise as this may help combat depression. She was reassured by the discussion and motivated to take positive steps to improve her wellbeing.”

“A customer picked up a calculator wheel from the counter one day. He came back the next day to say he had used it and didn't realise he had been drinking so many units. He said "I'd need to wise up". A few weeks later he was in to report that he had cut his alcohol consumption by at least half and was feeling much better about himself.”

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