

June 2006

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Editorial



Contact:
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Welcome to the latest Link On! Magazine, which has an alcohol theme this time.

If you haven't come across the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) before, we're the people who are responsible for the local implementation of the national drug strategy. One of our new responsibilities is to develop and implement an Alcohol Strategy for Suffolk.

Suffolk DAAT works closely with all our partners in addressing the causes of alcohol misuse and its consequences – both health and community safety related. We aim to increase the number of people in treatment and also reduce crime and alcohol related anti-social behaviour rates across Suffolk.

As a county we are now investing more in drug treatment. As a result of this investment and the hard work of our partners, we have seen over 2000 people engage in drug and alcohol treatment last year, more than ever before.

As we start a new round of investment we are very confident that we can build on our success and make a real and lasting impact on reducing the harm that drugs and alcohol cause for the people of Suffolk.

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Beating the buzzer at the Suffolk Show



Contact Katie Hazelton
Phone: 01473 264288

Trying to beat the buzzer while wearing 'beer goggles' and taste-testing the latest 'mocktails' (non-alcoholic cocktails) were just two of the attractions in the Suffolk County Council marquee at this year's Suffolk Show.

The aim of the Social Inclusion stand was to encourage people to think about drugs and alcohol and their effects on people, on anti-social behaviour and on domestic violence.

The staff team from the DAAT and Community Safety braved the cold and rain to give away 2,000 mocktails and goodie bags of information. People could also enter a competition to name the two mocktails being served up and win a mocktail making kit – and we're busy sifting through the hundreds of entries as Link On! goes to press.

To see if you can beat the buzzer challenge (with the beer goggles!) or to serve our special mocktails at event you're organising or to borrow the drugs roulette game, please contact the DAAT for details.

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Alcoholic, boozer, binge drinker, or social drinker?

National statistics (from 2000) show that one in four 16 to 74 year olds are hazardous drinkers, meaning they have experienced immediate problems after drinking such as memory loss, injuries, or failure to do what is expected of them. Among 16 to 24 year olds, this figure rises to 42%. Figures published by the Department of Health in 2002 show that children aged 11 to 15 years old who drink alcohol, consumed almost twice as much in 2001 (9.8 units per week) as they did in 1990 (5.3 units per week).

Alcohol causes nearly 1 in 10 of all ill-health and premature deaths in Europe. In public health terms it is argued that alcohol-related issues are more important than high cholesterol levels and obesity, with the World Health Organisation saying in 2002 that the negative effects of alcohol are 3 times more important than diabetes and 5 times more important than asthma.

In Suffolk in 2004 there were 22 deaths that involved alcohol – including alcohol intoxication, poisoning, alcohol-related illness/disease or accidents – which is 43% of all unexpected deaths. These figures increase to 29, if the cases where the mixing of other substances with alcohol are included.

The effects of alcohol misuse and the subsequent issues are varied and unique to the individual. The available treatment therefore must mirror their needs. In Suffolk a person with an alcohol problem may get treatment including counselling, a detoxification program, structured day care plan, support within community based programs or advice and information.

There may be other problems that people will need help with. They may have social problems such as family arguments, debt, unemployment,

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domestic violence, loss of friends and aggression. They may have emotional problems, including insomnia, anxiety, amnesia, depression and attempted suicide. Or they may have health problems - accidents or injuries, sexual difficulties or high blood pressure.

Families, carers, friends and others who are affected by someone's alcohol misuse also have access to the system. Family support is an integral part of structured work. It offers assessment, brief interventions, and an opportunity to look at co-dependency issues and family systems. It can also provide a chance for people to gain support from others facing similar situations in a group setting.

If you are worried about your drinking or the drinking of someone you know, there are agencies in the community which offer confidential service and will be able to help you.

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Asbo-oze? Is it a teen problem?

Alcohol is everywhere - in adverts, on television, debated in the media and in Parliament.

Would Eastenders be the same without the hallowed ground of the Queen Vic for Albert Square's surly residents to retreat to? Parents drink, teachers drink, Youth Offending Team workers drink (I know – I find it hard to believe too!!!) and according to the media Britain's streets are awash with drunken louts swigging from 3 litre bottles of Frosty Jacks cider and terrorizing the neighbourhood.

Alcohol is part of our culture in the UK and whether we like it or not, its existence and the problems associated with excessive use are not going to disappear.

As a NORCAS substance misuse worker seconded to Lowestoft Youth Offending Service I work with a wide range of clients who have been involved in the use and misuse of alcohol, often directly related to their criminal activity. The work I undertake with these young people is based around harm reduction - the main approach which NORCAS is passionate about. The ability for people, especially young people, to make informed choices is the aim of each NORCAS worker.

When it comes to a substance such as alcohol, which is so deeply entrenched in the every day lives of the British public, challenging myths and preconceived ideas can be quite a test.

Working with young people around units of alcohol and what exactly they are and how the body and brain is affected is a worthwhile piece of work. Unfortunately the Government developed the safe guidelines around alcohol with adults in mind. Young people who are often most vulnerable with regards to alcohol are offered no realistic guidelines. I suppose that is just because no-one under 18 touches a drop eh?

The look of amazement seen on the faces of most young people when they realise that drinking an alco-pop, a drink generally thought of as weak and harmless, is as strong as a premium strength lager, is a great reward.

Young people are usually quite willing to reflect on their own behaviours if given the proper tools to do so. We at NORCAS enable them to do this through workshops, quizzes and the use of various alcohol related dilemmas. These represent realistic situations which they are likely to have encountered, giving the young person a chance to discuss their reactions with the benefit of foresight.

Each young person who meets with a NORCAS worker is assessed and then directly involved in a specific care plan to meet their individual needs. We accept that young people use and misuse alcohol and therefore work at making sure that they have enough knowledge to become responsible users.

A great part of this is looking at when and where young people drink. A large percentage of my clients drink on the streets putting themselves at risk of both committing crime and becoming victims themselves. As part of harm reduction we work through emergency procedures (such as the recovery position, heat loss) as well as looking at attitudes to alcohol and the effect on mood and inhibitions.

To conclude, we as adults provide role models for young people when it comes to alcohol. The glass of wine after a hard day at work. The "I could do with a drink!" after a particularly stressful event. Things that many of us are guilty of can lead to a culture of self-medication with alcohol. How much of the behaviour we see in young people in general is learned from us?

Much headline space is given over to binge drinking and its detrimental effect on society. However, many people do not realise that the definition of binge drinking is double the daily safe units in one sitting. See below for what this means. Makes you think about your own nights down the boozier eh?

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Matt Mason
NORCAS Drug and
Alcohol Worker
Seconded into the Youth
Offending Service

How much can you drink?

It is recommended that men drink no more than three to four units per day and that women drink two to three. This is about two pints of normal strength beer for men and one and a half for women.

1 pint of normal strength beer (3 - 3.5% abv) = 2 units
1 standard pub measure of spirits = 1 unit
1 50ml glass of sherry or fortified wine = 1 unit
1 175ml glass of wine (12% abv) = 2 units
1 440ml can of strong ale or lager (4.6 - 6% abv) = 3 units

This may not seem a lot but remember you are poisoning your body each time you take a drink, and so it's just whether you want your body to stand a chance of recovering from it or not. This applies whether you drink every day or not. You can't for example 'save up' units for a session at the end of the week - the body does not work that way.

So binge drinking would mean drinking 6 units in one sitting for an adult male (eg 3 pints of average strength beer or 6 small glasses of wine or 6

pub measures of spirits). For an adult female, binge drinking would mean drinking 4 units in one sitting – 2 pints, or 4 glasses of wine or 4 measures of spirits.

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Home Office report on underage drinking

A recently published report from the Home Office on underage drinking is now available on the Internet.

Underage drinking: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey focuses on results from the 2004 survey for 10 to 17 year olds. It explores the prevalence and nature of underage drinking and the relationship between alcohol consumption and offending among young people.

A copy of the report can be downloaded at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/r277.pdf>

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Linking domestic violence and alcohol

There are many links between domestic violence and alcohol abuse. Abusers may use alcohol as the excuse for their violent behaviour, or will escalate the physical, sexual or emotional assault when they are drunk. Victims may start drinking excessively following an assault to cope with the physical and emotional pain, shame and fear they experience. However alcohol should never be used to justify or explain violence and abuse – nor should alcohol use by either partner be accepted as an excuse.

Research has shown that alcohol is a factor in almost half of all domestic violence incidents reported to the Police. As this is thought to be under-reported, the actual figure is understood to be nearer 60%. Victims of domestic violence where alcohol is a factor also face additional perceived or actual barriers to seeking support or receiving services. They may be unable to access Refuge places, fear their children will be taken from them, and even if they attempt to seek support for their alcohol misuse they may not be asked about underlying domestic violence and abuse.

Harmony project established in Suffolk

Based on the Stella project in London, a successful bid was made to the Alcohol Education Research Council (AERC). We now have a grant to employ a part time project co-ordinator for two years to develop safe choices for victims of domestic violence and their families. The co-ordinator will be raising awareness of the links between domestic violence and alcohol, and will be encouraging service providers to adopt an integrated approach to domestic violence issues. This post will be advertised shortly.

Cocktails theme to domestic violence campaign

An awareness campaign driving home the links between domestic violence and alcohol was launched on 26 April at the entrance to the South Pier in Lowestoft.

The campaign uses the theme of three cocktails 'Bloody Mary', 'Harvey

Wallbanger' and 'Tequila Slammer' to deliver messages to victims and abusers and their family and friends. The aim is to encourage people to report domestic violence, or to get information and support.

Campaign materials include adverts on buses around the county, and posters, beer mats and leaflets will be displayed in pubs, nightclubs, leisure centres and health centres. Vandal proof poster frames will also be used so that the message can be advertised in toilets as well.

Funding for the campaign was provided through the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (which includes district and borough councils, Suffolk County Council, the police and others) the Nightsafe partnership and the Drinkaware Trust.

The Drinkaware Trust, which was established in 2002, promotes alcohol education through giving grants. It also publishes literature and runs campaigns to improve awareness of responsible drinking and understanding of alcohol use. Matthew Bradby said: "The Trust is very glad to be supporting this innovative and hard hitting campaign. Its powerful messages will encourage people to think twice about the real consequences of alcohol misuse."

Dawn Burgess, licensee at Notleys in Lowestoft said many different groups and agencies were working to tackle the problems around alcohol related violent crimes. She said: "As an active member of the Nightsafe partnership in Lowestoft, I am glad to be able to support the campaign through making information discreetly available at Notleys. Having the posters and information available in the privacy of the toilet areas is a brilliant idea and offers crucial support to people who suffer violence at home."

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Contact: Marianne
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Violence Coordinator
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Email: marianne.fellowes@suffolk.pnn.police.uk



Do you need drugs training?

Have you ever wanted to know the facts behind the drugs scandals you read about in the papers? Do you come across people affected by the use and misuse of alcohol or other drugs?

The DAAT provides training on a range of topics that deal with drugs and alcohol. There are courses for those new to the field and for those who need to concentrate on particular issues that will help them in their work.

From January to March 2006 we trained over 500 professionals and we remain committed to raising knowledge and awareness about this fundamental and fascinating subject!

Courses are often free and are run throughout the year at different locations throughout Suffolk. We can even run tailored courses just for your team.

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For more information
and a full training
programme contact:
Carole Makinson
Email:
carole.makinson@csu.suffolkcc.gov.uk
Phone: 01473 265172

Educating the public about drugs

Sonia Barzey and Robin Herne are available to talk to any community group with an interest in improving knowledge of substance misuse -

For more information and a full training programme contact:
Carole Makinson
Email:
carole.makinson@csu.su
ffolkcc.gov.uk
Phone: 01473 265172

groups such as PTAs, Women's Institutes, church groups, Scouts and Guides, youth clubs and voluntary organisations. In addition, they can also provide introductory training to professional groups who require a basic awareness. In the past Robin and Sonia have spoken to firemen, teachers, clergy and hospital nurses.

The 'Tier One' training offered covers a variety of topics, and can cover:

- a general introduction to illegal drugs
- a focus on binge drinking and alcoholism
- tranquilliser dependency
- the dangers of smoking
- steroid abuse
- excessive use of the over-the-counter medications.

These sessions are grounded in a "Harm Reduction" philosophy. This means the trainers avoid preaching or finger-wagging, accepting that many people engage in all sorts of unhealthy activities.

The aims of the sessions are:

- to help substance users and their friends, relatives and carers make a realistic assessment of the risks that they or their loved ones or clients are running
- to develop strategies to help them lessen or eliminate those risks
- to point people towards sources of help, should they ever need them.

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Health Jam: Cannabis is illegal



Cannabis is a drug. Cannabis is illegal. Two apparently simple facts, but the appreciation of this is distinctly blurred within some sections of our community.

This is particularly the case in Ipswich. Information from a survey of 100 excluded young people, conducted by Youth Workers from Suffolk County Council, suggested that 78% used "heavy" amounts of cannabis on a "frequent" basis.

A number of these young people reported feeling bored and depressed, which appeared to be symptomatic of a completely de-motivated lifestyle. Other features of this lifestyle included a poor diet and a lack of participation in sports.

To try and engage with these young people, a special event is being held on the Cornhill in Ipswich on 26 July 2006, from 10am to 2pm. The 'Health Jam: Cannabis is illegal' event aims to celebrate youth and healthy living, to provide an alternative choice to smoking cannabis.

A range of activities will be on offer to young people, including sports, music, information, advice, and healthy eating activities. Organisations involved include: Icen, Positive Futures, Ipswich 4, Suffolk Stop Smoking, M T Bellies (healthy foods) The Wong Academy, Suffolk Young Peoples' Health Project, United Kingdom Youth Parliament, CSV Media, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, East Anglian Ambulance Service, Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council.

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For more information contact Tibbs Pinter, Substance Misuse Officer at Ipswich Borough Council.
Phone: 01473 433436

Free leaflet for parents and carers – up-dated

To get a copy contact
Robin Herne at Suffolk
DAAT
Phone: 01473 265170

We have now redesigned our parents and carers leaflet to take into account some recent changes in the law, such as those affecting the legality of psilocybin mushrooms (a type of magic mushrooms) and the implementation of the 2003 Alcohol Licensing Act.

The updated leaflet is easily distinguishable from the old one by its new colour scheme - a delightful shade of purple that should appeal to goths and Harry Potter fans alike!

The leaflet is free to any organisation or individual who might benefit from the information.

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Contact details for organisations that can help with drink problems

NORCAS – 01473 259382
Focus 12 – 01284 701702
Alcoholics Anonymous – 0845 769 7555
Drink line – 0800 917 8282
West Suffolk Drug Service – 01284 775275
Community Drug Team Ipswich – 01473 236069

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How to contact Link On!

This edition of Link On! was edited by Moira Jackson, corporate communications manager at Suffolk County Council. Please email any comments or copy for future editions to moira.jackson@comms.suffolkcc.gov.uk or phone 01473 264398

The next edition of Link On! is due out in September, and will have safer neighbourhoods as its theme.

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