



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

TO OUR GOOD HEALTH

**Supporting the over 50s workforce to
make healthier choices about alcohol**

A practical, workplace guide for anyone
supporting an over 50s workforce
to remain healthy and well

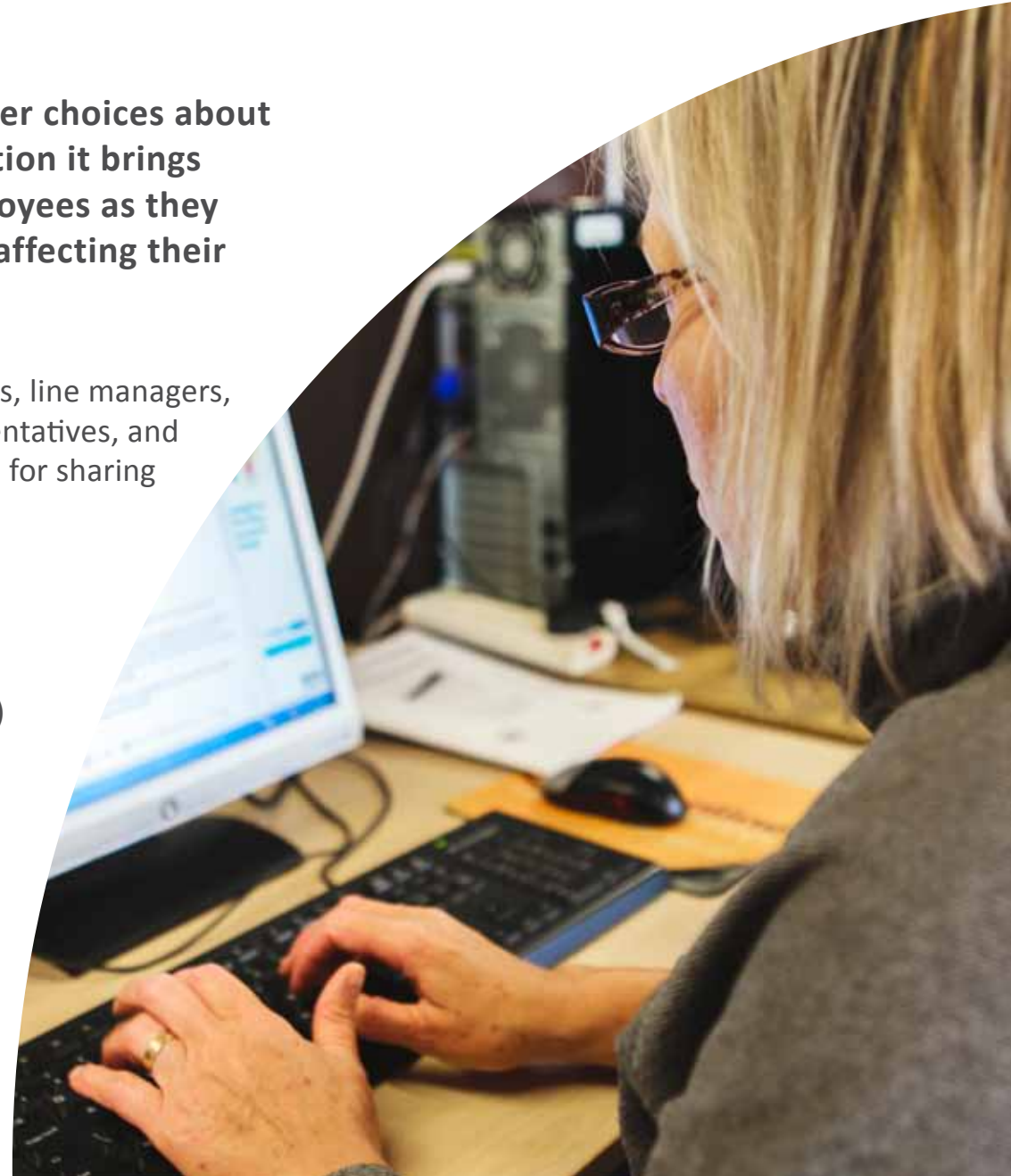
WELCOME TO THE DRINK WISE, AGE WELL WORKPLACE GUIDE

Drink Wise, Age Well supports people to make healthier choices about their drinking as they age. This guide and the information it brings together is designed to support the wellbeing of employees as they get older and in turn prevent alcohol from negatively affecting their work and home life.

The information in this guide is particularly targeted at employers, line managers, Human Resources, Occupational Health and Trade Union representatives, and provides a wide range of alcohol awareness information intended for sharing with the whole work force.

The workplace guide addresses the following:

- How alcohol use can impact on the workplace
- Alcohol units (what they are and how they can be calculated)
- UK alcohol guidelines and simple tips on how employees could make healthier choices around their alcohol use
- Why alcohol impacts people differently as they age
- The importance of valuing older employees and reducing stigma about alcohol in the workplace
- How the workplace can support employees to make healthier choices about alcohol as they age



ALCOHOL, AGEING AND THE WORKPLACE

It is important to be aware of how alcohol can affect the health and performance of staff in the workplace – in particular, how it can affect them as they age.

As we get older our bodies change. This means we may be at increased risk of harm from alcohol even when drinking within recommended limits, especially if we have any health conditions or are on medication.

As we age, we all face life changing events, such as changes at work, children leaving home, changes to our health or retirement. When facing these life events, many of us may see alcohol as a way to relax each day or to unwind at the end of the week. However, alcohol use can easily become part of a routine or habit, sometimes without even realising.

People now drink at home more than anywhere else – more so as they get older. At home it is easier to be overgenerous with measures and harder to keep track of how much we are drinking. Consuming alcohol on a regular basis, especially if we are drinking more alcohol than we realise, can start to have an impact on, not just our home lives, but our work lives too.

Learning more about how much we are drinking can help us keep an eye out for some of the potential problems and enable us to stay healthier at work for longer.



At 51 years old, I learned some new information about alcohol and the body which I didn't know before. It will definitely make me think about what I drink in the future



**Annie, Drink Wise, Age Well
Workshop participant**

HOW ALCOHOL AFFECTS THE WORKPLACE

In the UK lost productivity due to alcohol has been estimated at about £7.3bn per year.⁽¹⁾ A 2007 study which surveyed UK employees, highlights the harm alcohol can cause for employers. The results are as follows:

- A third of employees admitted to having attended to work with a hangover.
- 15% reported having been drunk at work.
- 1 in 10 reported hangovers at work once a month; 1 in 20 once a week.
- Work problems resulting from hangovers or being drunk at work included difficulty concentrating; reduced productivity; tiredness and mistakes.
- The majority of employers (77%) interviewed identified alcohol as a major threat to employee wellbeing and a factor encouraging sickness absence.⁽²⁾

Over the past 30 years, the employment rate for people aged 50-64 has grown from 55.4% to 70.7%, an increase of 15.3%. The employment rate for over 65s has also doubled in the last 30 years, from 4.9% to 10.7%.⁽³⁾

Why Age Matters

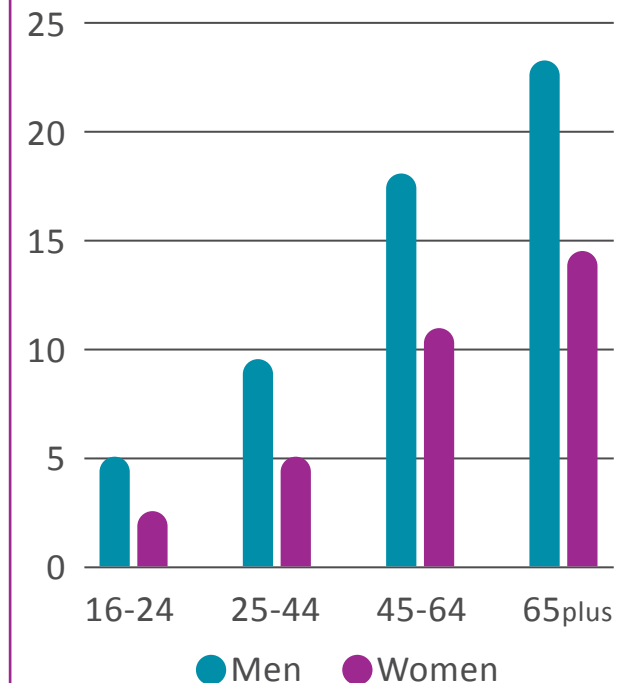
Older adults are now more likely to exceed recommended alcohol limits and drink every day than any other age group.⁽⁵⁾

In our recent Drink Wise, Age Well study we found that 20% of adults aged over 50 drink at increasing risk or higher risk levels, meaning if they continue to do so they may be at significant risk of harm⁽⁶⁾. This is potentially 1 in 5 of the workforce aged over 50.

Alcohol related hospital admissions and alcohol related deaths are highest in our older population (age 55-64 years)^(7, 8).

Our ageing population is also increasing⁽⁹⁾ so it is important that we take a whole systems approach to reduce this trend of alcohol related harm. This includes educating people in their place of work.

Proportion (%) who drank alcohol on at least five days in the last week⁽⁴⁾



THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL ON WORKING LIVES

As we get older, we may notice changes in our hair colour, skin and body flexibility. How our bodies function and metabolise changes too. This means that it will take longer than it used to for our bodies to process alcohol.

Sharing this information so that staff can make healthier choices about their drinking as they age may help prevent some of the negative impacts that alcohol can have.

Impacts that alcohol may have on someone's work life include:

Result in disciplinary, or job loss



Reduce earnings due to absence and other factors



Decrease ability to focus and concentrate



Create social embarrassment with work colleagues



Alcohol can have negative effects even if we are drinking within the recommended limits, especially as we age. **Regularly drinking alcohol can:**

Cause memory problems



Make you depressed or anxious



Put you over the drink driving limit



Mean a poor night's sleep



As we get older, alcohol affects us differently and can start causing us problems. **It can:**

Interact negatively with medications



Increase blood pressure



Increase the risk of injury or falls



Make health problems worse i.e. Diabetes



ALCOHOL, AGEING AND THE BODY

Age is something that comes to us all and can result in alcohol affecting us differently.

This diagram of the body shows how alcohol can affect different parts of the body as we age.



BRAIN Alcohol produces a more rapid depressant effect on the brain, and as individuals age, they are particularly sensitive to the toxic effects of alcohol on the brain.



METABOLISM When we get older our ability to break down alcohol decreases.



BALANCE As people age they are more susceptible to lose their balance after acute alcohol ingestion making us susceptible to falls. We are also more likely to experience a fracture if we fall.



MEDICATION As people age they often take medication. These can interact negatively with alcohol.



BODY COMPOSITION Muscle is replaced by body fat as individuals get older. Alcohol is not drawn into body fat as well as it draws into muscle, therefore, blood alcohol concentration remains higher in older adults.



CANCER Seven types of cancer are linked to alcohol use including breast and bowel cancer, both of which are more common in older men and women.















OTHER DISEASES Drinking too much alcohol can cause heart problems such as abnormal heart rhythms, high blood pressure, damage to the heart muscle and other diseases such as stroke.

BENEFITS OF HAVING ALCOHOL AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Providing employees with information about alcohol and its effects supports them to make healthier choices about their drinking as they age.

Making these healthier choices may have many beneficial effects on them and their work life, such as they:

<p>May be more productive at work</p> 	<p>May find it easier to get up for work in the mornings</p> 	<p>May allow for further progression at work</p> 	<p>May improve working relationships and increase team morale</p> 
<p>Improve your health, relationships and energy.</p> 	<p>By cutting down on the amount you drink you can save money.</p> 	<p>A more refreshing sleep and more energy as a result.</p> 	<p>Medication may work better and be more effective.</p> 
<p>You can reignite old interests or find new hobbies.</p> 	<p>You are less likely to have an accident or fall.</p> 	<p>Improved memory and sharper mind.</p> 	<p>You may stay healthy and independent for longer.</p> 

Employers making healthier choices about their drinking may not only have benefits for the workplace but also for their personal lives. For example, it may:

WHAT ARE ALCOHOL UNITS?




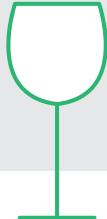



There are many times when employees may get asked how many units they consume, for example, when visiting their doctor or dentist. But do they actually know what units are? If not, how possible is it for them to make healthier choices about their drinking?

For employees to work out what units they are consuming they need to consider the alcohol by volume (%) and the amount that they are drinking (ml). This varies from one alcoholic drink to another so sharing the following formula with employees may allow them to know exactly how many units they are consuming each time they have a drink.

Alternatively an online units calculator can be found at drinkaware.co.uk or drinkwisewales.org.uk

$$\text{strength (ABV)} \times \text{volume (ml)} \div 1000 = \text{units}$$

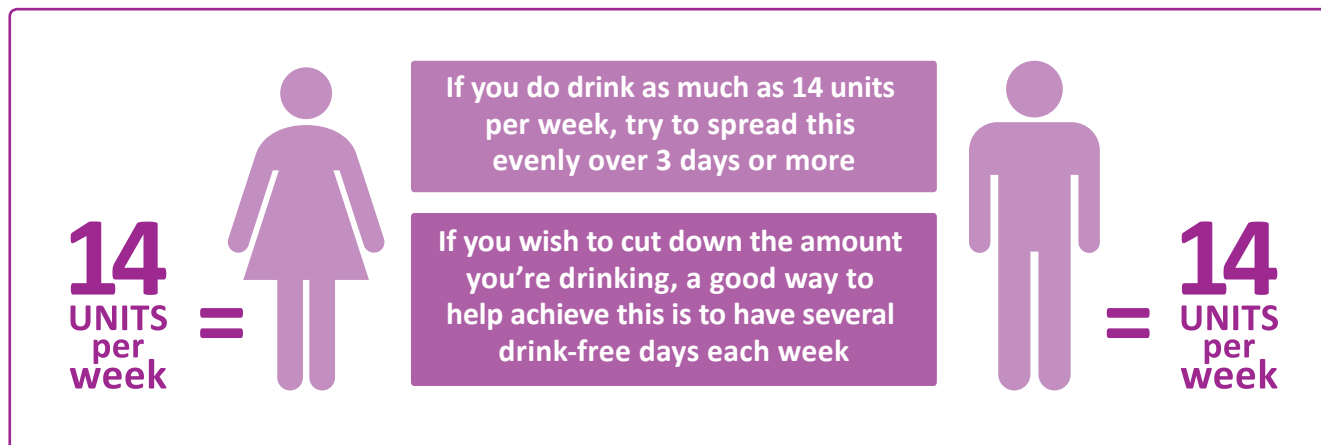
This table shows some common alcohol beverages and their unit and calorie contents

CAN LAGER / BEER / CIDER	BOTTLE LAGER / BEER / CIDER	PINT HIGHER STRENGTH LAGER / BEER / CIDER	LARGE GLASS WHITE / RED / ROSÉ WINE	STANDARD GLASS WHITE / RED / ROSÉ WINE	SMALL GLASS WHITE / RED / ROSÉ WINE	SINGLE SMALL SHOT SPIRITS
440ml ABV 4.5%	330ml ABV 5%	568ml (pint) ABV 5.2%	250ml ABV 12%	175ml ABV 12%	125ml ABV 12%	25ml ABV 40%
2 units	1.7 units	3 units	3 units	2.1 units	1.5 units	1 unit
167 calories	142 calories	250 calories	195 calories	135 calories	98 calories	56 calories
						

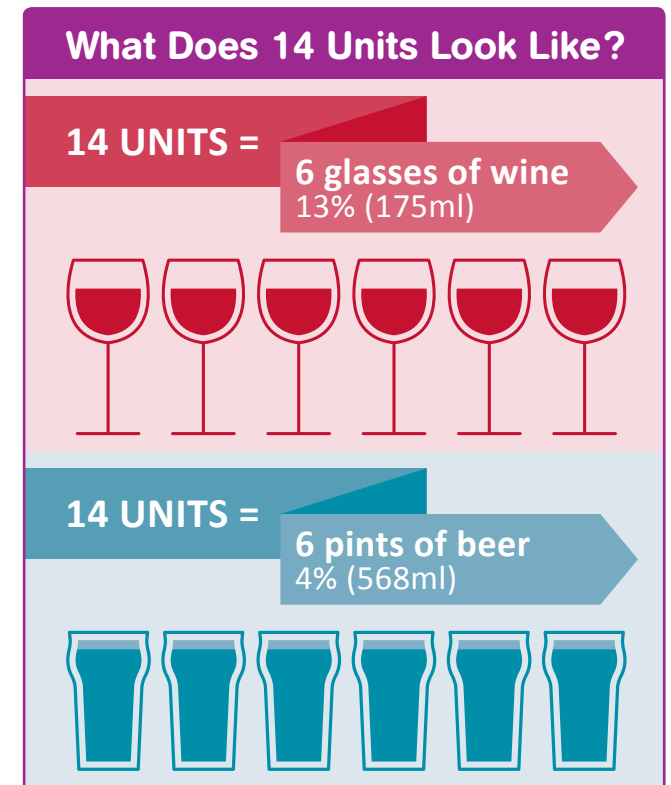
Calories – Alcoholic drinks contain many calories, however, they provide no nutritional value. If employees are being mindful about their weight, reducing their alcohol intake may help to prevent weight gain.

WHAT ARE THE UK GOVERNMENT ALCOHOL GUIDELINES?

Alcohol is a toxin, and there is no safe limit to alcohol use. The current government guidelines are based on lower risk levels. If you stay within these levels then you are 'less' likely to experience any harm from alcohol.



Drink Wise, Age Well surveyed nearly 17,000 adults aged 50 and over about their alcohol use. Nearly three quarters of those that responded were unable to identify the UK government alcohol guidelines⁽⁶⁾. In order for people to make healthier choices about their alcohol use it is vital they understand how much they should and do drink.



ALCOHOL AND DRIVING

It may be easy to come home from work in the evening and have a few glasses of wine or a few pints. However, it is important to remember alcohol can still be in our systems the next day.

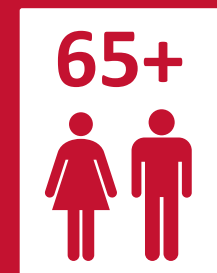
It takes a healthy adult roughly one hour to process one unit of alcohol, plus an estimated one hour to reach peak blood alcohol concentration. However, this varies depending on age, gender, weight, if you are taking medication, as well as many other factors, so the best advice is to always avoid driving when drinking, even the following morning.

As we age, our bodies change and our ability to break down alcohol is reduced. This means that it may take longer for the liver of an older adult to process one unit of alcohol. Because of this, older people need to be more cautious about the fact that alcohol could still be in their systems the next day. This is something to consider if employees have to drive to work or if driving is part of the job and/or they operate machinery.

Prosecutions for drink or drug driving increased by 40% in those aged 65+ during the period of 2000 to 2009⁽¹⁰⁾.

Driving under the influence of alcohol can have serious repercussions. Firstly, it puts other people's safety at risk. Secondly, being prosecuted for drink driving can result in one's driving license being evoked, imprisonment, large fines and job loss.

Drink driving convictions increasing in adult aged 65+



VALUING THE OLDER WORKFORCE

As employees get older they generally develop a range of skills, knowledge and experience which can be immensely valuable in any organisation. Many good employers have implemented strategies to make the best use of this resource.

“Joined up” approaches to get the best out of older employees can include encouraging them to train and retrain, move to jobs where they mentor or pass on knowledge to younger employees. They could adopt working patterns that respect their different needs and limitations (rotating shift patterns may be particularly difficult to manage, for example) and focus on prevention of ill health and early retirements.

Many older employees find themselves caring for a family member and appreciate support as working carers. It is vitally important to support older employees if we are to give them the best opportunities to fully realise their fantastic potential.

Imagine the folly of installing valuable machinery or new systems in a workplace and then by neglect, allowing them to become unusable and out of date. No employer would do such a thing. The same goes for older workers. After a life time of working, many older workers can add experience, skills and knowledge that any employer should value. Used correctly, they bring crystalized life experience – the added element for success.



**Chris Ball, Specialist Adviser
on the Ageing Workforce**



REDUCING STIGMA IN THE WORKPLACE

People often think that as they get older, it will be too late to change habits, including reducing their alcohol consumption. However, this is certainly not the case.

Evidence suggests that older adults are more likely to recover from an alcohol problem than younger adults. However older adults may not always ask for help if they have an alcohol problem as our Drink Wise, Age Well survey found.

In fact one in four who were surveyed would not ask for help and nearly half believe people with alcohol problems have themselves to blame⁽⁶⁾. For these reasons it is essential that the workplace offers a supportive environment for people to come forward for help if they need it.

This may include having information posters about alcohol in the communal areas, providing employee counselling services or inviting organisations in to deliver alcohol awareness sessions.

Also be aware of the role alcohol plays in your workplace. Do work lunches or nights out always involve alcohol? Or are any alternatives offered?



WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR WORKPLACE? POLICY

Not only can problem alcohol use be a cause of employee ill-health, it can lead to absenteeism, lost productivity and be a safety hazard to your customers and the public. Your organisation could be liable for any injury or damage caused by an employee impaired by alcohol.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires you to take appropriate steps to ensure the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their activities. In the event that you are negligent of your duty of care towards your employees you could become liable under common law. In some kinds of work, some small element of risk may be greatly magnified by alcohol – for example in driving. It is your responsibility to ensure that, “as far as reasonably practicable”, the health, safety and well-being of all employees and that the safety of others is not put at risk either.

On one hand, you cannot afford to neglect your duty of care, while on the other, even if you have strict rules against employees’ use of alcohol, you still have to implement them with due regard for procedures and “natural justice” to ensure any dismissal is fair.

Employees’ well-being should always be a high priority. When they face difficulties it helps if you have policies and procedures in place to support them. Having a measured approach to each case, finding the facts and establishing whether or not the individual needs help, will avoid the need to pick and choose and make exceptions or special cases.

None of the above means that you should not have firm rules, but you will need the right policies to implement them sensibly.

THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES

Well-being Policies

These are needed to promote the health and well-being of employees, including encouraging careful approaches to alcohol. If you talk about well-being in a general way, touching on diet, exercise, keeping well and so on, it can be easier to bring in the topic of alcohol and the negative impacts it can have. Weight gain can occur when we consume more calories than we burn. We may not always realise but alcohol can be a major contributor to calorie intake. If you offer health checks, run campaigns on healthy living, give support for sports clubs or gym membership and so on, alcohol consumption patterns can be discussed as a healthy living issue. More and more people are expecting to work into later life, so remaining healthy is ever more important.

Discipline and Poor Performance

Even though you focus on prevention of problems, you may still need to deal with episodes of alcohol misuse with a blend of fairness, adherence to rules and understanding of the individual's circumstances. Policies are important, even though they will never be enough alone.

To be successful, policies need to be “owned” and led by someone near the top of the organisation. They also need to be communicated, understood by everyone and managers trained to use them. The examples set by others and the culture of the organisation must be consistent with the official policies, otherwise the policy will not command respect.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS SHOULD A POLICY COVER?

The Government's employment advisory service Acas, has **published helpful guidance on alcohol and drugs policies**. This includes **further information on employers' legal and statutory duties**.

The **Acas Advisory Booklet on health and wellbeing** contains a simple check list of issues to cover in drawing up a policy to handle drugs and alcohol issues⁽¹¹⁾. On their website **TAEN** provide some examples of **free model alcohol and drug policies**.

In summary, your policy should contain:

1	Overall statement	Show clear recognition of the health, safety, social and reputational nature of alcohol problems in the workplace, the organisation's attitude towards its employees, customers and the general public. Lay down simple and clear rules about the consumption of alcohol in work.	5	How problems are noticed	Alcohol problems may be noticed because of bad performance, misconduct, breach of rules, a falling off of work standards or repeated health issues. Make it clear that employees who refer themselves for support are helped and not punished.
2	Recognition of realities	A zero tolerance approach to alcohol offences may be absolutely necessary in some industries e.g. transport, but it is also important to have a pragmatic approach and dismissing a long valued and skilled staff member may be more harmful for your workplace. People can drink too much for many reasons and as a compassionate employer it is important to explore the underlying reasons. Prevention and giving people support to change their habits may be a better plan. Your policy could commit to offering a counselling service / treatment with a clear understanding that the individual will cooperate with it.	6	Twin track approach	Offer a twin track approach including reasonable assistance and the option of treatment for anyone with an alcohol dependency as an alternative to disciplinary action under the clearly stated rules.
3	Duty of care	You have a duty of care to all employees as well as your customers and the general public who could be affected by your business. This needs to be reflected in the policy.	7	Medical advice	Be mindful that problem drinking can have serious health consequences. If you suspect an employee maybe drinking at harmful levels it is important that you support them where possible to access appropriate medical support and advice. This may involve referring them to occupational health services or offering time off to attend GP/treatment services.
4	Training and awareness	Any policy will be worthless if the people covered by it are not fully on board. Consider training in the specific provisions of the policy and explain the health implications of alcohol misuse.	8	Returning to work	Coming back to work following a period off for alcohol treatment and support can be a daunting experience for an employee in recovery. Ensure you implement the same phased return to work support you would offer someone with any health condition after a period of absence e.g. reduced tasks or hours. Their positive and successful return to work will only be of benefit to your workplace.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

PROVIDE EMPLOYEES WITH ALCOHOL AWARENESS WORKSHOPS/TRAINING

To support employees and managers at work, providing alcohol awareness workshops/training may be very beneficial. There are many providers who deliver such workshops and training for organisations.

Workplaces based in any of the Drink Wise, Age Well demonstration areas (Sheffield, Glasgow, Western Trust Area in Northern Ireland, Devon and Cwm Taf in Wales) can access such workshops free of charge.

These Drink Wise, Age Well sessions aim to improve employees' alcohol awareness. They include information on how to work out the number of units in alcoholic drinks, the impact alcohol can have on health and wellbeing as we age and how we can make healthier lifestyle choices about our alcohol consumption. The sessions additionally explain where staff can access support should they need it.

Whatever training is provided, it is essential that the workshops or training are for everyone within the workplace. An inclusive policy like this will demonstrate the importance the employer places on protecting staff wellbeing.

If your organisation does not fall in the Drink Wise, Age Well demonstration areas, you can still visit our website drinkwiseagewell.co.uk for further alcohol awareness information focusing particularly on alcohol as we age.

Members of Unite have benefitted from the Drink Wise, Age Well project. Unite reps especially, have been given the information that may be shared with members and potential members linked to their personal wellbeing. Members that have taken part in the pilot course, delivered at the Unite Sheffield District Office, felt they came away with information and knowledge that may also be used in their social circle. I feel supporting such campaigns will educate Unite members to recognise the potential harm alcohol may cause in particular vulnerable groups, such as the over 50's. Increasing awareness of alcohol related issues in the workplace can only help towards healthy ageing.



Andy Cullen,
Unite Learning Organiser, Sheffield

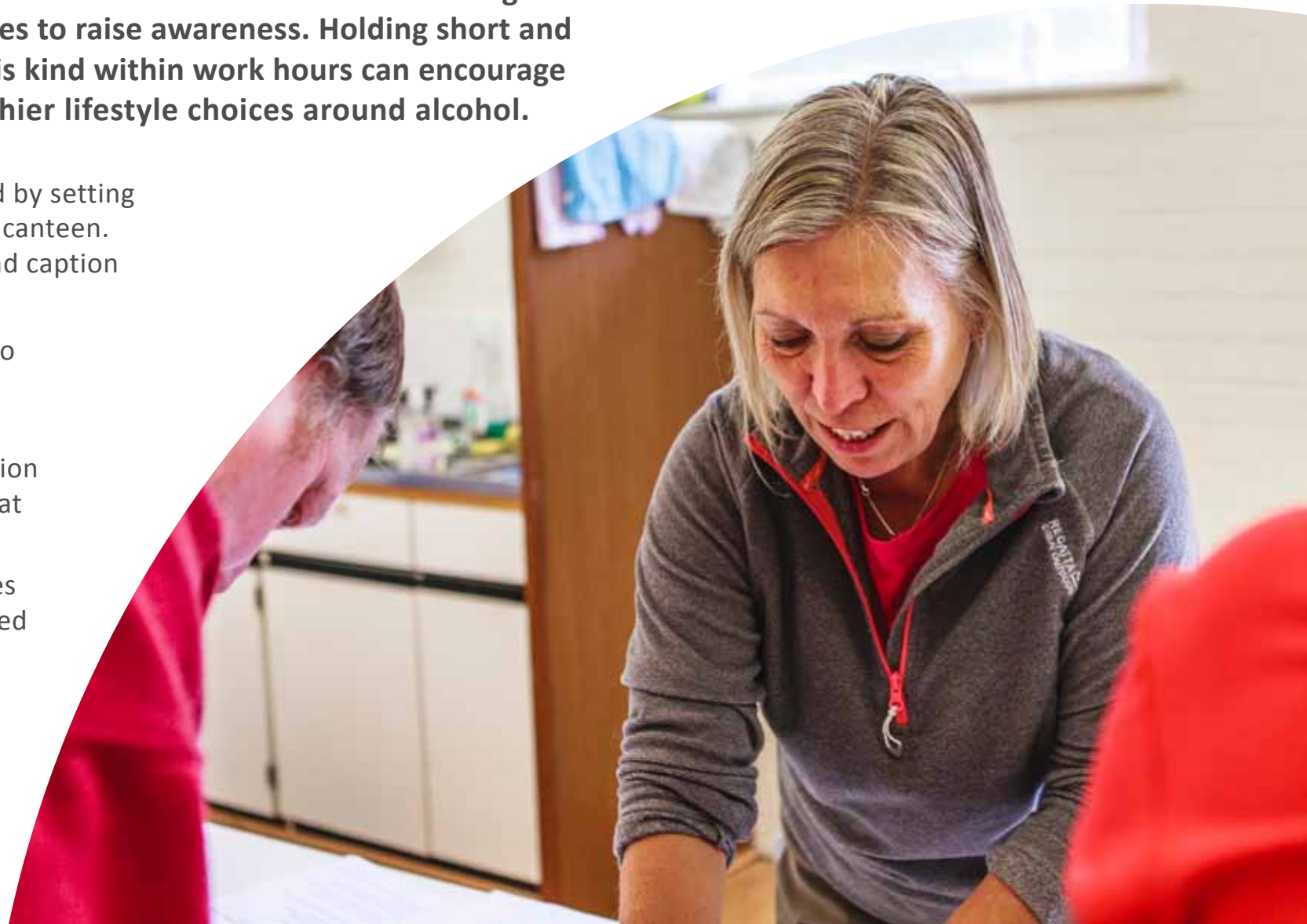
WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

ALCOHOL AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Employees can be helped to become more aware of the dangers of alcohol through activities to raise awareness. Holding short and interactive activities of this kind within work hours can encourage employees to make healthier lifestyle choices around alcohol.

Such activities may be offered by setting up a small stall or desk in the canteen. Activities may include card and caption challenges such as:

- ? Can you match the units to the commonly consumed alcoholic drinks?
- ? Can you identify the location of the main body parts that are affected by alcohol?
- ? Can you match the calories to the commonly consumed alcoholic drinks?



WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

In the workplace, employees often learn most effectively from one another. Providing them with conversation starters may therefore be a good way to encourage learning. Once the conversation is flowing, colleagues can share their knowledge about alcohol with one another. Allowing these conversations to develop may encourage individuals to think about their alcohol use and make healthier choices.

Peer Workplace Alcohol Awareness Champions

Encouraging employees to become Workplace Peer Champions can be an effective way of spreading the alcohol awareness message to staff. In the demonstration areas of Drink Wise, Age Well we can support Workplace Peer Champions and provide them with the most up to date information to share with colleagues. Continually supporting the wellbeing of staff around their alcohol use in the workplace will make sense in terms of costs and benefits. Organisations outside of the Drink Wise, Age Well demonstration areas can also adopt Workplace alcohol awareness Peer Champions. Staff could be encouraged to take up these roles after they have received awareness training from any suitable training provider.

Fact sheets and articles

Some people find that being able to take away and read information about the impacts of alcohol can help in making healthier choices. A range of fact sheets and articles available to distribute to employees, can be found in the resource section of this guide and on drinkwiseagewell.co.uk

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Drink, Work & Me, is an employer-led, pioneering programme in Northern Ireland that seeks to help employees understand the wider impacts of alcohol and assist them to make informed choices about their drinking.

Over a three year period, twenty companies have already participated in the programme which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered in partnership by Business in the Community NI, Addiction NI and the Social Research Centre. The initiative provides information, employee training and access to support interventions. Participating companies can access a suite of online resources including an Employers' Toolkit, e-learning resource and a recently launched DRINKWATCH app.

Talking about alcohol use and misuse within the workplace should not be off-limits. Instead, organisations should promote an open and friendly working culture where employees feel comfortable in speaking to their colleagues and manager about any concerns or issues they may have. Drink, Work and Me encourages employers to assist any individuals who are experiencing problems and ensure they have access to relevant support services as early as possible in order to reduce the impact on themselves, their colleagues, their family and the business.

“

**Deborah McConnell,
Head of Workplace at
Business in the Community**



RAISING THE SUBJECT OF ALCOHOL IN THE WORK PLACE

Talking about how much one drinks can be a sensitive subject for many people. Talking about such things in the workplace can be even more difficult.

However, if we don't talk about these issues we are not giving employees the opportunity to increase their knowledge, be aware of the risks alcohol can cause as we age or to make informed healthier lifestyle choices.

If we want to raise awareness, we have to find ways of talking and engaging with the issues.

To help raise the subject of alcohol in the workplace, here are some national campaigns to link in with. They can provide a helpful way to broach the subject of alcohol and well-being

NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS	
January	Dry January
January	National Obesity Awareness Week
February	World Cancer Day
February	National Heart Month
March	National Sleep Awareness Week
March	World Oral Health Day
April	National Public Health Week
April	World Day for Health and Safety at Work
May	Mental Health Awareness Week
June	Diabetes Week
September	National Work Life Week
October	Stoptober
November	Road Safety Week



HEALTHIER CHOICES

Employees who want to make healthier choices around their alcohol use, can be supported by the following tool.

Providing the tool and explaining the score system may help them to make the first steps to healthier drinking. This tool can also be completed on our website drinkwiseagewell.org.uk

	Scoring System					Your Score
	0	1	2	3	4	
How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?	Never	Monthly or less	2-4 times per month	2-3 times per week	4+ times per week	
How many units of alcohol do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking?	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-9	10+	
How often have you had 6 or more units if female, or 8 or more if male, on a single occasion in the last year?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
TOTAL						

Audit C - World Health Organisation

0 – 4

WELL DONE

You are a lower risk drinker and less likely to experience problems caused by alcohol

5 – 12

MIND YOURSELF

You may be drinking at a level that can cause problems for you now or in the future

HEALTHIER CHOICES

How can you help employees who feel they are perhaps drinking a little too much and would like to reduce their alcohol consumption?

Providing them with some simple ways to achieve their goal may help such employees to make these healthier lifestyle changes.

START TO MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES ABOUT YOUR ALCOHOL USE

6 TIPS TO MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES ABOUT ALCOHOL

- 1 **LOWER YOUR RISK**
Stay within the recommended guidelines of 14 units per week and spread these out over a few days.
- 2 **KEEP TRACK**
Use smaller glasses or a unit measure. It's easy to pour yourself larger drinks at home. Checking how much you pour can help you keep track and cut back.
- 3 **MORE TO LIFE**
Getting older has its positives, such as more time to do things we enjoy. Focus on hobbies, interests and socialising without alcohol.
- 4 **GIVE YOUR BODY A BREAK**
Have at least 2-3 alcohol free days each week.
- 5 **EAT SOMETHING**
Have a meal when you are drinking or eat something beforehand.
- 6 **KEEP HYDRATED**
Have a non-alcoholic drink or water with or after each alcoholic drink. Sometimes we don't feel the effects right away and drink a little too quickly.

BUILDING RESILIENCE AS WE AGE WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

‘Resilience – an individual’s ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. Stress and adversity can come in the shape of family or relationship problems, health problems, or workplace and financial stressors, among others’⁽¹²⁾.

We spend approximately one third of our lives at work, so all the more reason why we should enjoy and thrive in our work lives. At Drink Wise, Age Well we want to help your employees to, not just survive the workplace but to thrive and flourish in it. In the UK, we have an ageing population. We are living longer and we will inevitably have to work longer meaning we will have an increasing ageing workforce. The workplace is a great gateway for strengthening employees’ resilience as they age.

As we get older, we may experience many of the life events that we speak about at the start of this workplace guide. Some of us may struggle to cope. Employees who cannot cope when facing life transitions, may resort to unhealthy behaviours such as increased alcohol consumption. This in turn may result in them going off sick, or even resigning from their jobs. All such actions can have a profound effect on employee’s wellbeing, not to mention the workplace that employs them.

This is why building resilience must go hand in hand with ageing. Successful organisations need to foster resilience. Having good policies and practices around alcohol awareness is simply one positive approach.

HOW CAN YOU HELP BUILD RESILIENCE?

For organisations based in the Drink Wise, Age Well delivery areas we offer a six session resilience course called Live Wise, Age Well.

Live Wise, Age Well provides life and coping skills in a relaxed group environment while addressing the subject of how alcohol and other negative behaviours can affect a person's resilience.

From our experience employees aged over 50 are open and willing to be influenced by information and resources that will support them to live more fulfilling lives, and possibly even reduce their alcohol intake at the same time.

For those organisations outside of the demonstration areas, there are other external providers who deliver similar sessions, including such elements as mindfulness and coping skills.

Live Wise, Age Well can be delivered within the workplace. There are also downloadable resources for all workplaces to access on the Drink Wise, Age Well Website.

Other ways of supporting employees facing life transitions could be through arranging volunteering, work fairs in your workplace, or signing up with a local voluntary organisation to identify volunteering opportunities. Volunteering can be a positive experience for many, and nearly half of 55-74 year olds currently volunteer⁽¹³⁾.

Thanks for organising the Live Wise, Age Well workshops for our staff aged 50 plus within the Western Health & Social care Trust, the sessions were well attended and thought-provoking and everyone benefitted from the discussions on alcohol and sleeping. Staff members all felt relaxed and were happy to participate in the discussions and activities. Staff, most of whom have given over 30 years' service, felt that the organisation was thinking about them.

“

Myles Smith, Head of Specialist Services & Medical Engineering, Western Health and Social Care Trust.

BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN THE WORKPLACE FOR RETIREMENT

One life transition that most people face at some point is retirement. It is essential that employees are prepared for this big life change and that they have the skills and knowledge to cope.

Often when employees come to retire the focus is on financial preparation. However, it is important to have a more holistic approach to preparing for retirement.

Drink Wise, Age Well surveyed nearly 17,000 people aged over 50 in relation to their use of alcohol. Of those who were drinking more now than in the past, 40% cited retirement as the main reason for increased alcohol use⁽⁶⁾.

When we retire we have more time on our hands, and can lose the structure and routine that work offered us. For many this will be a fantastic opportunity to explore new life experiences, however for some, this change may lead to more negative behaviours such as increased alcohol use.

A holistic plan can strengthen the resilience of employees facing retirement. If your organisation is based in the Drink Wise, Age Well five delivery areas, part of the plan may involve offering employees the Live Wise, Age Well resilience course or similar. Having a holistic retirement plan prepared means employees will be equipped with the life skills and knowledge to know what risk factors they may come up against in retirement that could leave them exposed to negative coping strategies such as increased drinking.

WHERE EMPLOYEES CAN SEEK SUPPORT

If an employee wants to make changes to their drinking, and feels that they need support to do so there are a number of routes they can take:

Online resources and information

- **Drink Wise, Age Well**
www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk
- **One you**
www.nhs.uk/oneyou
- **Alcohol Concern**
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
- **Drink Aware**
www.drinkaware.co.uk
- **NHS Choices**
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx>

Legal support resources

- **acas**
<http://www.acas.org.uk>
- **Department for work and Pensions**
<http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>
- **Citizen's Advice UK**
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- **Home Insurance**
Check your home insurance as some give employment law cover in the event of formal disputes.
- **Trade Unions**
Trade unions can often support to employees who may be having problems at work.
www.tuc.org.uk

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