



## THEME 4

# Alcohol

## Theme introduction

### Background<sup>1,2</sup>

Drinking too much alcohol is a major cause of preventable early death. For people aged 15 to 49 in England, alcohol is now the leading risk factor for ill-health, early death and disability and the fifth leading risk factor for ill health across all age groups. It was the cause of 1.4% of all deaths registered in England and Wales in 2012 and this figure is rising year on year. There are currently 10.8 million adults in England drinking more than the advised 14 units a week, in other words, at levels which pose harm to their health.

Harmful drinking and alcohol dependence does not affect people equally, it is more common in men than women for example. The impact of harmful drinking is much greater for those in the lowest income bracket and those experiencing the highest levels of deprivation. For example, there are now over 1 million hospital admissions relating to alcohol each year, half of which occur in the lowest three socio-economic groups. People who have mental health problems, are homeless, socially isolated or are offenders are much more likely to be affected by harmful drinking and alcohol dependence.

The Skilled for Health programme provides an ideal opportunity for all participants to make sure they are well informed about how to drink alcohol within safe limits and how to access help and support should they need it.

### National targets/policies

Many policies have been developed with the primary aim of reducing the public health burden of alcohol. These policies reflect three key influencers of alcohol consumption:

- price (affordability)
- ease of purchase (availability)
- social norms around its consumption (acceptability)<sup>3</sup>

Government targets want to see:

- a change in behaviour so that people think it isn't acceptable to drink in ways that could cause harm to themselves or others
- a reduction in the amount of alcohol-fuelled violent crime
- a reduction in the number of adults drinking above the lower-risk guidelines
- a reduction in the number of people binge drinking

1. The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies  
An evidence review, Public Health England, December 2016

2. Guidance – Health matters: harmful drinking and alcohol dependence, Published 21 January 2016

3. The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies  
An evidence review, Public Health England, December 2016

- a reduction in the number of alcohol-related deaths
- a reduction in the number of people aged 11 to 15 drinking alcohol and a reduction in the amount they drink<sup>4</sup>

Specific measurable targets around alcohol are set out by each local authority area through their Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

## **This theme**

The topics in this theme support participants to be aware of the effects of drinking too much alcohol on health and wellbeing, develop their understanding of how to drink alcohol within safe limits and to reflect on their personal alcohol drinking behaviour.

The topics in this theme are:

- Alcohol

## **Further information and suggestions**

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/Alcohol-misuse/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Alcohol-misuse/)

One You Days Off and Drinks Tracker Apps [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/drinking](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/drinking)

Drinkaware [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

---

4. 2010 to 2015 government policy: harmful drinking Updated 8 May 2015

## Mapping to Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

Topic	Functional Skills		Core Curriculum	
	English	Maths	Literacy/Language (L)	Numeracy (N)
1 Alcohol	E3.8 L1.13	E3.17 E2.5 L1.13	Rw/E3.1 Rw/L1.1	MSS1/E3.7 N1/E2.4 N2/L1.8