

## GINA monthly e-news December 08

### Women Feeling Good prison event



On 25 November the third Women Feeling Good event took place at HMP Aberdeen. The theme of the event was the relationship between women in prison and alcohol. The Governor of HMP Aberdeen, Audrey Mooney, held the event as part of her project proposal aiming to raise awareness at corporate and local level regarding the choices people make about alcohol and the effects they have.

From her years of experience and work with female prisoners she gave an insightful presentation about their life in prison and the massive effects alcohol has on their lives. In terms of female prisoners, the impact alcohol has is massive, affecting their physical and mental health, as well as their families. The governor pointed out that prison is often the easy part, but the aftermath is the problem, where prisoners have to fit back into their old circumstances, and can often fall back into old ways. Her recommendation would be that more help is given to the prisoners to adjust in the first month after their release to prevent this from happening.

A play was also put on for the guests at the event, by the Grampian Youth & Community Prison Project. The project aims to promote safer communities by directing young people away from offending by letting school pupils experience prison life with the use of theatre and the prisoners own testimonies. After the play the guests took part in an informative question and answer session with the prisoners about the role drugs and alcohol played in their lives. The event was finished off with a tour of the prison.

Women Feeling Good was launched at the beginning of 2008. Its aim is to empower professional women working in all settings, private, public, voluntary and community, to spark debate and discussion around alcohol. It also challenges women to do something, big or small, to raise awareness around alcohol issues, from simply providing alcohol leaflets, to putting on an event. The Women Feeling Good team are planning a showcase event to take place February/March 2009. Please email [nhsq.wfg@nhs.net](mailto:nhsq.wfg@nhs.net) to find out more about Women Feeling Good, or about the forthcoming event.

### In the news . . .

#### Flip flops for binge drinkers

Police officers and safety officials in Torbay have been handing out the plastic sandals to revellers who were spotted staggering home in unstable high heels or bare feet. The Devon resort attracts its fair share of heavy drinkers and police have noticed that some women in high heels are inclined to topple over after a long night out or take off their shoes to rest their tired feet and walk home in bare or stockinged feet, dodging the broken glass and rubbish. The move is intended to help them get home safely and to give officers an opportunity to speak to the partygoers. Superintendent Chris Singer said "It's not simply so that people can get home in comfort. It gives us the opportunity for us to talk to these young people and get over safety messages to them. We're

making sure we take every opportunity to engage with people and talk to them about keeping themselves safe." However, Matthew Elliott, the chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said "This is an idiotic waste of money. People don't pay their taxes for drunk women to get free flip-flops, they want the police to fight crime. The police aren't there to be an emergency supplier of flat shoes."

Source: [The Guardian online, 28/11/08](#)

### **Top headmistress attacks botox and bingeing culture facing young girls**

Vickie Tuck, president of the Girls School's Association, said parents were growing increasingly anxious that their daughters were growing up too fast, in a world seemingly dominated by "Botox and bingeing". Ms Tuck, Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, spoke at the annual conference of her association. Ms Tuck told the conference "Sometimes, surrounded by media reports on botox and bingeing, it's easy to feel we live in a moral vacuum, garden in a gale." She said that "prolonging the wholesomeness of children" was often cited by parents as a key reason for choosing a girls' school. She also added that parents were "worried – aren't we all – about a coarsening of society and the toxic cocktail of binge drinking, internet safety, and the early sexualisation of girls."

Source: [The Scotsman, 18/11/08](#)

### **Alcohol could be made to reveal its calorie content**

Bottles of wine and beer could be forced to carry labels showing their calorie content. Experts believe it could have a big impact on binge drinkers undeterred by warnings about units of alcohol. The groups likely to be targeted would be youngsters and women. One option would see the calorie content accompanied by an equivalent type of food – such as comparing the calories in a pint of lager to those in a sausage roll. But the drinks industry cautioned against the plan from the Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD). It warned of the dangers of people deciding they may have to "skip a meal" in order to drink. The ACMD said all bottles of alcohol should carry labels warning of the "harm caused" in a similar way to cigarette packets. It added

"Labelling could include calorie content". One example was "A pint of lager = 2.3 units = 170 calories = a sausage roll." The Scottish Government said it supported better labelling on bottles and cans. A similar idea was announced in Scotland in 2004, but the scheme was later dropped. Measures applied in England would also apply in Scotland as the packaging is used by the same UK companies.

Source: [Daily Mail, 26/11/08](#)

### **Young women drinking a week's alcohol in one night**

A significant proportion of young women have drunk a weeks worth of alcohol in one night a study has found. Girls are also starting to drink from a younger age with most admitting to having tried alcohol by the age of 13 or 14. Researchers at the University of Manchester asked 208 women aged 16-24 about their drinking habits. Three quarters said they drank more than 5 units of alcohol – the equivalent of five spirit measures – on every night out. The recommended daily limit is 2-3 units. Six per cent said they had drunk an entire week's recommended intake in just one night.

Source: [The Daily Telegraph, 15/11/08](#)

### **Binge drinking increases risky sexual behaviour for women**

Binge drinking is linked to risky sexual behaviour for everyone, but that behaviour is particularly dangerous for women, according to a study by the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. A study of 671 people who were being treated at a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases revealed that binge drinking among women was linked to unsafe sexual practices and high rates of gonorrhoea, more so than binge drinking among the men treated at the clinic. Geetanjali Chander, assistant professor of medicine said "This association between binge drinking and high-risk sexual behaviours is especially important as risky behaviours are associated with HIV acquisition and transmission." According to the researchers, binge drinking and risky sexual behaviours are more hazardous to women for the following reasons:

- Consuming the same amount of alcohol as men, women will have a higher blood alcohol concentration of alcohol in their system.
- If women and men consume the same amount of alcohol, women will experience substantially greater alcohol-caused impairment than men.
- Men are eight to 10 times more likely to transmit HIV to a female partner through repeated, unprotected sexual intercourse than women are to transmit the virus to men.

The authors suggest that healthcare providers treating sexually transmitted diseases should screen their patients not only for alcohol dependence, but also for binge drinking, because it is associated with high-risk behaviours.

Source: About.com: Alcoholism, 15/10/08

## AFS and Alcohol Support Ltd launch online support service in Aberdeen

Alcohol Focus Scotland has launched a new online support service - AFS Alcohol Support Online - for people in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire concerned about their own or someone else's drinking. The free service will allow people to sign up via local agency Alcohol Support Ltd's website [www.alcoholsupport.co.uk](http://www.alcoholsupport.co.uk) and exchange messages with a trained alcohol counsellor. Online support fills a gap in current provision of alcohol services as some people who would not consider attending a traditional counselling service would prefer e-counselling as a way of receiving support and assistance. This could include people who feel there is a stigma in asking for help for alcohol problems, young people who prefer to communicate online, and those who are prevented by geography or disability from accessing other services.

Jack Law, chief executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland said "We are really excited about this innovative way of providing access to help and advice for people concerned about

their drinking. One in three men and one in four women exceed the recommended daily limits so there is a real need for services such as this which can encourage people to cut down their drinking to healthier levels."



## Events

### 13 January 2009, FDAP Annual Drug and Alcohol Professionals Conference – London

This year's annual conference, in association with Drink & Drugs News, will take place on 13 January 2009 at the Royal Institute of British Architects, Central London. Plenary topics include: the new drug strategy and evaluation of the first drug strategy; working with families; young drinkers and implications for policy; getting people into employment; the Independent Safeguarding Authority and implications for our field; and diversity & inequality at work. While a series of workshops and seminars will cover a range of issues, including: khat, ketamine and cannabis; diversity and dual diagnosis; prescribing interventions; and staff training & development. For more information visit <http://www.fdap.org.uk/fdapevents/conf2009.html>

## Training

### Stow College, 2009 Courses; Introduction to Women's Studies

This unique course offers the opportunity to cover a wide range of topics relating to

women's position in society. This course aims to develop students' knowledge of gender issues, and offers an excellent opportunity to further develop skills in understanding topical issues, team work and research skills. For further information please email [rwilson@stow.ac.uk](mailto:rwilson@stow.ac.uk)

## Resources

### GINA festive party tips

This leaflet helps women to enjoy the festive season sensibly. It offers tips and advice on how to have a great night and get home safely. To order any leaflets please get in touch with GINA.

### Drinkaware posters

Drinkaware have produced some new campaign materials for the festive period. To obtain a PDF version of the materials please get in touch with GINA.



## Do you have any information you would like to share with the GINA network?

We would love to hear from you if you have examples of best practice, studies of interest, information on services or upcoming events etc. If so please get in touch.

The next GINA newsletter will be distributed in January 2009.

**GINA Project Officer**  
**Alcohol Focus Scotland**  
**166 Buchanan Street**  
**Glasgow**  
**G1 2LW**

T: 0141 572 6597

E: [gina@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:gina@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk)

W: [www.ginascotland.org.uk](http://www.ginascotland.org.uk)