

**GINA monthly e-news
June 09**

**Older women and alcohol
research report**

In 2008 Alcohol Focus Scotland and the GINA Stakeholder Group agreed that the GINA Project would carry out some developmental work looking at the issue of alcohol and ageing. In line with GINA's focus on women it was further agreed that the work would give a particular emphasis to older women's relationship with alcohol.

Why?

There is evidence that today's population of older people may be relatively heavier drinkers than in previous generations. This is particularly true of those who have been affected by the changing social context of drinking, and have lived through changing attitudes towards the acceptability of female drinking. If the current trend in older people's drinking continues, this, combined with the substantial increase in the older population will have alarming consequences for our health and social care services.

GINA has worked with both Age Concern and the Scottish Pensioners Forum to coordinate a series of focus groups and disseminate questionnaires to gather qualitative and quantitative information on this topic. GINA has also worked with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers to develop training for carers in relation to alcohol and ageing.

The information gathered from this research and development work has given us an interesting insight into older people's attitudes, experience and relationship with alcohol as well as their level of alcohol awareness. For example, only 20% of the women who took part report never drinking alcohol, and 77% think that the over 55s

should be given more information about alcohol. All the findings from this work have been analysed and are now being collated into a research report which will be available to download from the GINA website in July. www.ginascotland.org.uk

The report will contain a number of recommendations for action based on our findings - we will have discussions with key partners in the coming months to hopefully begin to move these actions forward.



In the news . . .

Binge drinking 'increases risk' of dementia

More under-65s and women in particular, will suffer alcohol-related brain damage, say doctors. Heavy drinking may be to blame for one in four cases of dementia. Doctors have linked alcohol intake to the development of the brain-wasting condition in between **10 and 24% of the estimated 700,000** people in the UK with the disease. They warn that binge drinking and increased consumption are likely to produce an epidemic of alcohol-related brain damage in the future, which could see drinkers starting to experience serious memory problems in their 40s. **Women who drink a lot are at much greater risk than men** of suffering problems with their cognitive functions, because they

are physiologically less well able to cope with alcohol's effects. Drink is known to kill brain cells, but the estimate of its impact on neurological health, contained in the Journal Alcohol and Alcoholism, indicates that the problem may be much more widespread than previously thought.

Source: Guardian.co.uk, 10/05/09

Women and girls to blame for one in four violent attacks

One in four violent attacks now involves a female as the true scale of the growing "ladette" culture is laid bare in new figures. More than half a million assaults were either carried out by a girl or woman last year or involved a female as part of a group. Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman, said: "It is indicative of how appalling habitual violence is on our streets that so many women are involved. The number of women, often teenage girls, resorting to violence is proof of a worrying binge-drinking ladette culture." **Women and girls were responsible for 13 per cent of all violent attacks in 2007/08**, according to the British Crime Survey, which was the equivalent of 281,320 assaults, robberies and muggings, compared with 11 per cent in the previous year. A further 11 per cent of incidents - or 238,040 crimes - involved both male and female offenders, the figures from the Home Office show. Females were also either directly responsible for or involved in **21 per cent of all woundings**, the equivalent of 98,070 offences, and 28 per cent of all assaults involving a minor injury. Half of all violent attacks involve alcohol fuelling fears of the impact of binge-drinking among women.

Source: Telegraph.co.uk, 26/05/09

Rapist 'get-out clause' concern

A move to dump a "get-out clause for rapists" in Scotland has been made by a Labour MSP. Margaret Curran said draft legislation to redefine rape law could allow claims that victims gave prior consent, before becoming incapable through drink. Legislation going through Parliament would create a new definition of consent as "free agreement". Ms Curran has now tabled an amendment to the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill, currently going through Parliament. The legislation would also set

out a list of circumstances where there can be no free agreement - including victims deemed to be incapable through alcohol. Ms Curran, MSP for Glasgow Baillieston, said: "The Scottish Government's legislation is well intentioned but we need to end the get-out clause for rapists. The law must provide protection to women who are targeted by predatory men even when they are very drunk." The call has been backed by the group Rape Crisis Scotland, which argue that **some men deliberately target very drunk women**. The Scottish Government is considering the suggestion - saying it was keen to look at any measure which may strengthen the legislation.

Source: BBC Online, 28/05/09



Big glass warning after drive ban

A motorist banned for drink-driving says she wants to warn of the dangers of drinking too much alcohol from large glasses used by bars and pubs. Jacqueline Atkinson of Llandudno, Conwy, said she "never imagined" she was over the limit after drinking one large glass of wine. She was banned from driving for a year and fined £450 by a Flintshire court. She weighs only eight stone and said after the case **she feared slim women could unwittingly be caught out**. Her solicitor said the training officer was devastated by the offence. Speaking after the case, Atkinson, said she was worried that pubs and bars now routinely serve large glasses of wine without asking the customer. Her lawyer, Stephen Mullarkey, handed magistrates a national newspaper cutting highlighting a government clampdown to get wine sold in smaller glasses, to prevent women unintentionally exceeding safe drink driving levels. She said the glass did not seem particularly large because she had large goblets at home.

Source: BBC Online, 02/05/09

NOFAS-UK Fetal Alcohol Forum



To increase the recognition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), NOFAS-UK has brought together leading researchers and healthcare specialists to launch the Fetal Alcohol Forum. The first issue of the bi-annual publication includes articles from all over the world on the issue of FASD. The publication can be downloaded online, and everyone is invited to sign up to the Forum network. To read the publication and for more information please visit www.nofas-uk.org

Nominations for Bighearted Scotland Awards 2009



Alcohol Focus Scotland is one of six member charities of Bighearted Scotland, a charity partnership which works together to raise vital funds for our work. Every year, Bighearted Scotland presents a range of Awards to Scots from all walks of life - the unsung heroes who have made extraordinary personal sacrifices to help others. We also honour personalities from the worlds of stage, screen, sport and business who have made a significant contribution towards helping others less fortunate. Last year's Awards event raised an incredible £107,000 for Bighearted Scotland and we offer our sincere thanks to all who made this night such a resounding success.

This year's Awards will be presented at a glittering black tie event on Friday 4 September. We need you to tell us about someone you think is a bighearted Scot – someone who has done something outstanding for someone else, their community or a charity. There are 7 categories – Bighearted Scot of the Year, Child of the Year, Carer of the Year, Fundraiser of the Year, Sports Person of the Year, Business Person of the Year and Entertainer of the Year. You can nominate online at www.bigheartedscotland.org

The closing date for nominations is Sunday 26 July at 5pm so please make sure your nomination is entered in time.

Events

16 September 2009, Scottish Women's Aid's Annual Conference: Paying The Price: The Social And Economic Costs Of Domestic Abuse, Edinburgh

The day will consider the cost of domestic abuse not only to individuals but also to the services supporting those individuals, to employers in lost hours, reduced productivity, morale, and to society, which is both economic and social. Keynote speakers: Bea Campbell and Ailsa McKay. For more information please visit www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

Training

14 July 2009, Domestic Violence, Problematic Substance Use and BAMER communities Level 1, London

Costs: £90 (voluntary) / £130 (statutory). If you book the level 2 version of the course at the same time you will benefit from the reduced price of £160 (vol) / £240 (stat) for both trainings. This course looks at the overlapping issues of domestic violence and problematic substance use for women from the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities. Participants will be encouraged to explore the issues of ethnicity, gender and culture in women's experiences of domestic violence and substance use. For more information please visit www.gldvp.org.uk

Resources

Pink handbag leaflets



GINA has produced more of our popular pink handbag shaped information leaflets. The leaflets offer information and advice to women going on a night out. If you would like to order some pink handbags please contact

gina@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

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 July 2009.

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