

Healthwatch 100: Alcohol use in Trafford

March 2024

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About Healthwatch Trafford and Healthwatch 100

Healthwatch Trafford is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other publicly funded support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

The Trafford Healthwatch 100 aims to get as many local people as possible to sign up and give their views on topics to do with health and social care via regular surveys. We want to gain as much information as possible so that we can direct our work to the issues that matter. Details for signing up can be found at: healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/the100/.

About this project

The aim of this project was to gain an understanding of concern locally around personal alcohol consumption and that of other people.

We conducted this project with collaboration from the Public Health Team at Trafford Council, to whom we pass on our warmest thanks and appreciation for their partnership. We pass on our additional thanks to members of the public who took part and volunteers who have supported this project.

This report begins with an outline of when the survey was launched and what we did. Key findings are outlined before an infographic showing the groups of individuals who responded to the survey. We then present what we heard from respondents broken down into one section relating to personal alcohol use and another concerning that of other people. This informs our recommendations before closing comments. At the end of the report, you will find some signposting information on where to access support in relation to alcohol misuse and an appendix listing the survey questions we asked.

What we did

Working alongside colleagues in the Trafford Public Health Team, we created and launched a Healthwatch 100 survey in January 2024 which remained live for 3 weeks; survey questions can be found in the appendix. It was sent to our subscriber list and promoted on our website and social media pages. We also visited local groups, events, and attended meetings with local partners during this time. The Public Health Team shared the survey externally and via their internal intranet. The project was timed to coincide with Dry January, where participants choose to abstain from alcohol for the month.

Key Findings

- When considering personal alcohol use, use in public, and use within social groups, respondents were most concerned about alcohol use in public.
- Respondents were most likely to consider accessing a specialist alcohol support service for help addressing their own alcohol use, followed by a GP.
- When advising others where to seek support, respondents were mostly likely to recommend contacting a GP.
- A large proportion of individuals would not feel comfortable discussing a family member or friend's alcohol use with them.

Who responded to our survey?



Most respondents identified as female (47%). 11% identified as male, 1% as non-binary, and the rest chose not to respond

14% of respondents were aged 66-79
30% were 45-65
12% were 35-44
3% were 18-34
The rest chose not to respond



54% of people who took part identified as straight/heterosexual
4% identified as lesbian
43% did not answer or preferred not to say



When asked about their household: Most respondents were either married or in a civil partnership, with others describing themselves as divorced or widowed, cohabiting, or single. 21 respondents had adult children and 12 had children in school. The rest either had none or declined to answer.



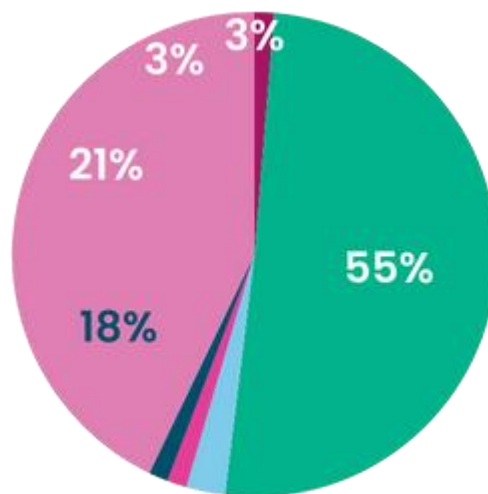
5% responses came from outside the borough, and the rest chose not to respond.

13% of respondents told us they were disabled, and 8% told us they were carers



3% people told us they could not work due to a disability, and **1%** were seeking employment. **40%** respondents were employed, and **13%** were retired. The rest did not respond.

When asked about their ethnicity: 55% described themselves as White British or English. 3% said they were White Irish, 1% mixed race, 1% Black British Caribbean, and 1% were White Other. The remainder declined to answer.



What we heard

Personal Drinking

The vast majority of respondents to this question (90%) were not worried about their own alcohol use. This is reflected in the levels of alcohol consumption as reported by individuals [figure 1] which show that 56% either don't drink at all or only drink on occasions. Although not evidenced specifically, it is likely that the majority of respondents consume alcohol within the NHS guidelines¹.

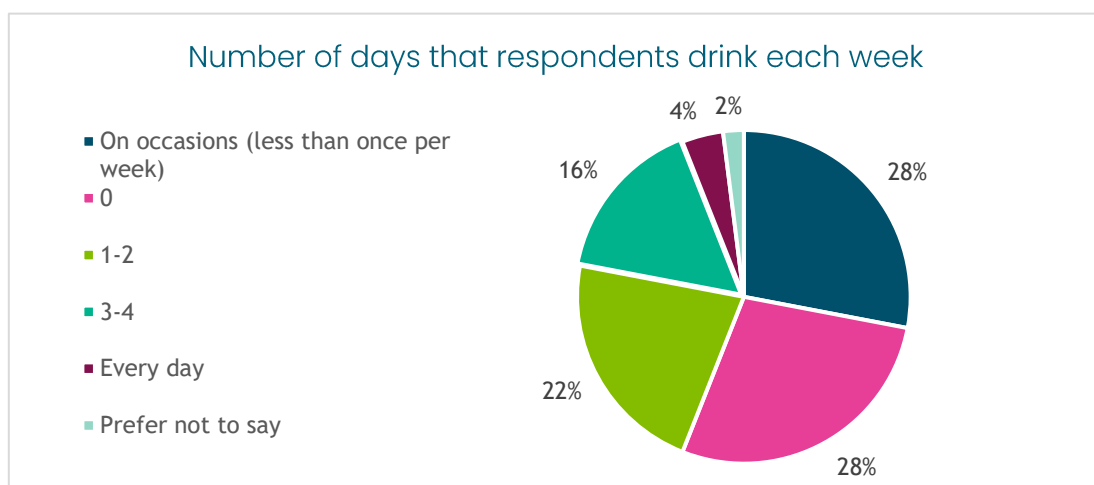


Figure 1

Support with personal alcohol use

Despite identifying minimal concern with current alcohol use in this survey, it is also important to highlight people's knowledge of where to get support if they were to need it; almost one fifth of respondents told us they would not know where to go. This is key, particularly given that Public Health England estimate that 76.2% of those who are alcohol dependant in Trafford are not receiving treatment². Encouragingly, however, even without naming the available options

¹ www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/#:~:text=Alcohol%20guidelines,risk%20of%20harming%20your%20health

² fingertips.phe.org.uk/public-health-dashboard-ft#page/4/gid/1938133154/pat/6/ati/402/are/E08000009/iid/93532/age/168/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1

almost one third of respondents suggested they would seek support via either Achieve³ or their GP.

We then provided respondents with a list of options to find out whether they would consider accessing them, or had accessed them previously [figure 2].

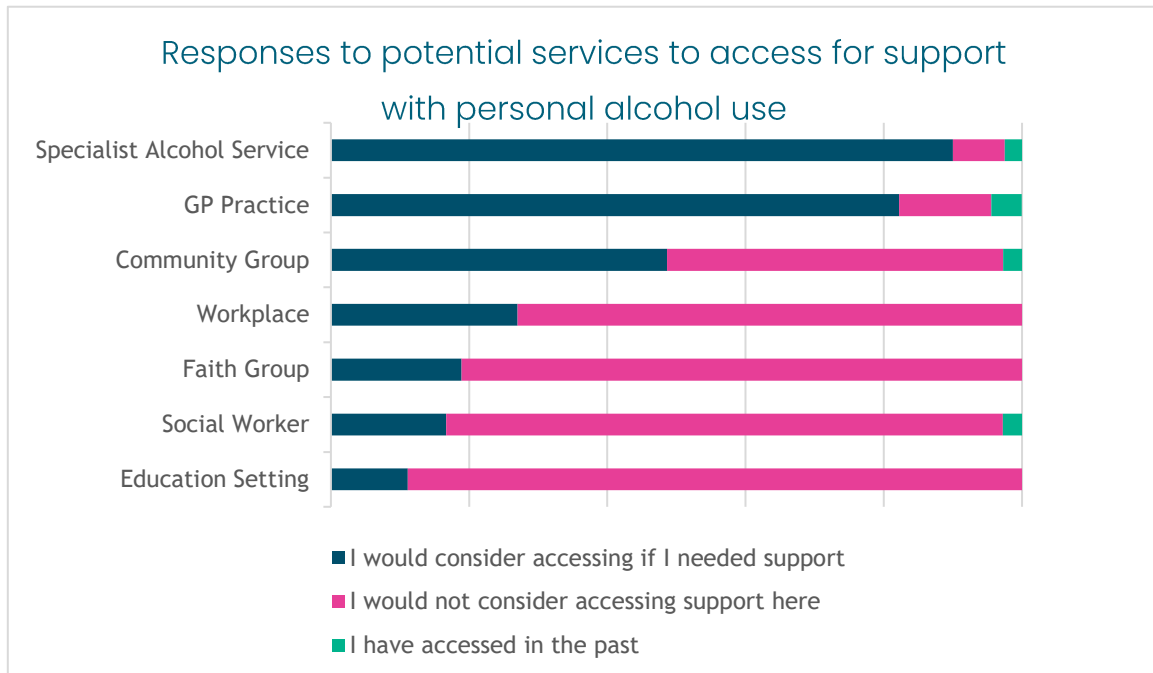


Figure 2

It is positive to see the most popular source of support was the specialist alcohol service, with 90% of respondents selecting this option. Achieve provide access to a variety of recovery functions depending on individual needs. Concerning Achieve specifically, one person commented:

'I'd prefer the Achieve support rather than the "sit in a circle " meeting environment'.

82% of respondents would also be likely to speak to their GP. Confidence in this source of support is vital given that GPs are appropriately placed for treating or referring patients effected by conditions linked to alcohol misuse (www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/risks).

³ <https://www.thebiglifegroup.com/service/achieve/>

Almost half of respondents suggested they would consider accessing a community group for support. This is also a positive finding as there is existing research on the links between drinking at home alone, mental health problems, and becoming alcohol dependent, an issue which heightened during the Covid19 pandemic⁴.

Barriers to accessing support

With regards to barriers that people may have experienced when accessing or considering accessing services, we found that a large proportion of respondents perceived there to be none. However, almost 40% of respondents highlighted concerns with waiting times for appointments as a potential barrier.

Other reasons given were: being unsure who to contact, worry about other people finding out, transport issues, and further problems with time. Specifically, people cited childcare commitments and being unable to get time off work as barriers to accessing support.

One respondent who selected the 'other' option commented:

"I have not experienced issues but I am aware of other people having transport issues and issues with money given where Achieve is and the attendance expected."

An additional respondent who also selected 'other'

"Social care and Local Authority professionals caused barriers - support not accessed as a result."

⁴ <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/alcohol-facts-and-data/alcohol-consumption-uk>
<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/media/press-releases/cost-of-living-pressures-placing-uk-adults-at-greater-risk-of-alcohol-dependence/>

Other people's drinking

We asked respondents how concerned they were about other people's alcohol consumption in three distinct areas [figure 4]. As we can see, the area in which people were most concerned about alcohol use was in public. However, a high proportion of respondents also expressed concern for others within their household and family, as well as within their social circles.

Given what we know about the extent of people locally who are alcohol dependent but not receiving treatment, this could highlight an issue around individuals not recognising their own alcohol dependency. Furthermore, it is important to equip family and friends with the ability to support alcohol dependents; Drinkaware found numerous ways in which other people's drinking habits can negatively impact people's lives to varying extents and in various ways, contributing to social, economic, and health-related problems⁵.

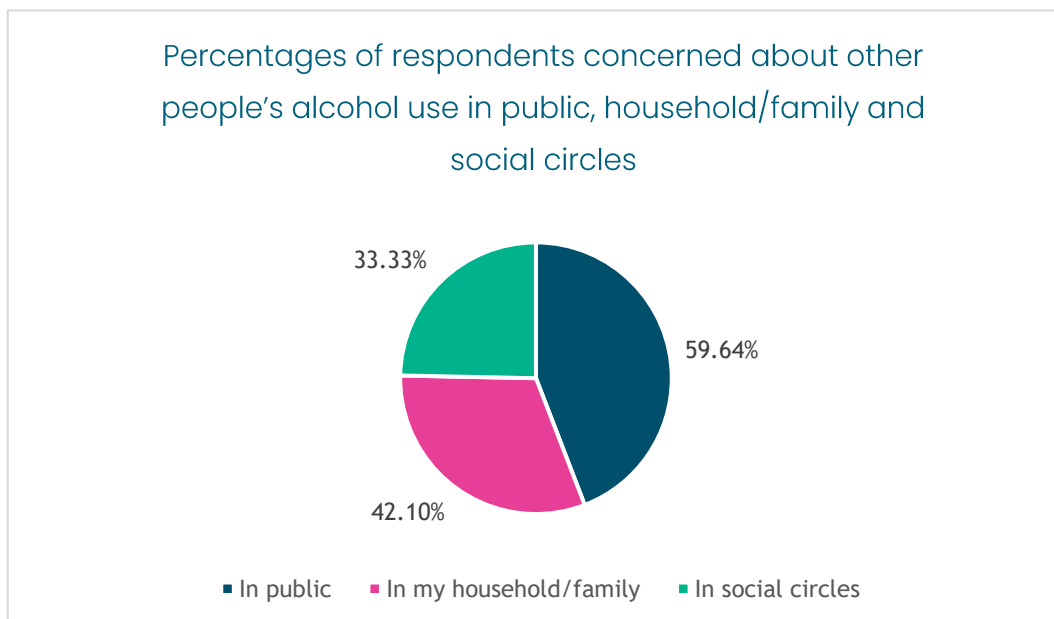


Figure 3

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https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/media/czupflsu/drinkaware_monitor_2022_research_report-2.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=133132469700000000

Supporting others to access care

22% of respondents said they would not feel comfortable having a conversation advising friends and family about support for their alcohol use. While there could be various individual reasons for this, Alcohol Change UK found that stigma towards alcoholism can be a barrier to support and recovery for both dependent drinkers and their family and friends, and they call for a more open, less judgemental approach to the topic⁶.

Over half of those who said they would approach the subject did not know where to signpost people for support. In cases where family and friends are concerned about someone's drinking habits, lack of confidence and knowledge identifying alcohol dependency in others, as well as how to support them, weakens their chances of accessing care.

When it came to where to signpost other people for support, people gave slightly different answers to those they selected for themselves. For instance, when advising others, respondents were more likely to suggest speaking to a GP (90.2%) and less likely to suggest accessing a specialist alcohol service (70.6%). This again could be a lack of knowledge or confidence, resulting in advising them to see a GP for a professional assessment. 17.7% would suggest a community group 5.9% would suggest a social worker, 2% would suggest looking for support via the workplace. Unlike for themselves, none of the respondents would suggest speaking to a faith group or education provider.

⁶ <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/fact-sheets/challenging-the-stigma-around-alcohol>

Recommendations

Knowledge of support

- Improving knowledge plays a vital role in helping individuals identify their own alcohol dependency and gain the confidence to access support to address the issue. In order to break down stigma, people need to be reassured that they can access care and support without shame. It is also important to arm loved ones with information about what help is out there, which may in turn mitigate the impact of a person's alcohol dependency on them.

Barriers to support

- People highlighted concerns around waiting times for treatment, an issue that occurs across health and social care services. As per other services, giving people an idea of wait times and what to do during this period may benefit them. Additionally, it would be useful to consider how to help people access care while contending with childcare and problems leaving work for appointments.

More research on the issue of drinking in public

- Of the three areas we suggested, the highest number of respondents expressed a concern with people drinking in public. It may be beneficial to explore this further to examine any possible trends in terms of localities where this is an issue and how the issue may present itself (e.g. anti-social behaviour).

Signposting and support

If you are worried that you, or someone close to you, is drinking too much, Drink Aware have an [app to check alcohol levels and signpost support](#).

If you feel you need support around your alcohol consumption, help is available:

- For specialist drug and alcohol treatment or advice contact [Achieve Trafford](#) on 0161 358 0991
- If you are under 21, please contact [Achieve Young People's service](#) – Early Break on 0161 723 3880.

If you are concerned about the alcohol use of someone close to you and not sure what to do:

- [Drink Aware: Worried about someone else's drinking?](#)
- If the person is a child or under 21, please contact Achieve Young People's service using the information above.

For general advice:

- Drink Aware: [Support Services](#)
- NHS guidance around alcohol consumption – [Alcohol advice - NHS](#).



Appendix: Survey Questions

- 1. Do you have any concerns about other people's alcohol use? (Tick all which apply).**

In public

In my household/family

In my social circles (friends/neighbours)

- 2. Would you know where to advise a friend or family member go to get support around their alcohol use?**

No

I wouldn't feel comfortable having that conversation

Yes (please tell us where):

- 3. Please select the places you would consider referring a friend or family member to for support with their alcohol use? (Tick all that apply):**

GP Practice

Social worker

Faith group

Community group

Workplace

Education setting

Specialist Alcohol service

Other (please specify):

- 4. Do you have any concerns about your alcohol use?**

Yes

No

- 5. How many days a week do you have at least one alcoholic drink?**

0

On occasions (less than once per week)

1-2

3-4

5-6

Every day

Prefer not to say

6. Would you know where to go if you wanted support reducing your alcohol use?

No

I don't feel I need support

Yes (please tell us where):

7. What do you think of the following places where you may choose to seek support with alcohol use? (Tick all that apply):

GP Practice

Social worker

Faith group

Community group

Workplace

Education setting

Specialist Alcohol service

8. Have you experienced any of the following barriers when considering or accessing support?

Waiting time for an appointment

Issues with transport

Getting time off work

Childcare commitments

Unsure who to contact

Worried about other people finding out

No barriers

Other (please specify):

12-14 Shaw's Road 
Altrincham
Cheshire
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