

Dear Colleague,

Re: Alcohol time to check?

May I take this opportunity to share with you the launch of “Alcohol time to check?” - a new resource for staff and the public. I have enclosed sample copies for you and your colleagues.

Alcohol screening needs to be seen as a priority and incorporated into standard practice. It is already a day to day feature in many assessments but research has shown we often find it easier to ask presumed “heavy drinkers” (dependent drinking patterns) but then miss the largest numbers of people who are at risk (hazardous / harmful drinking patterns). In England, 8.2 million people are estimated to drink above maximum daily guideline amounts: **7.1 million** hazardously / harmfully and **1.1 million** dependently (ANARP, 2005).

It is common for staff to continue to assess alcohol intake based on weekly consumption levels however we know that this may mask “risky single occasion drinking”. “Alcohol time to check” uses the single alcohol screening question (SASQ) to screen for hazardous, harmful and dependent drinking patterns. Research so far has found people to be twice more likely to moderate their drinking after a brief conversation with health care staff.

“Alcohol time to check” includes:

- Guidelines for delivering a “simple brief intervention” (page 2)
- Strategies and facts to take away to help explore change (page 3 - 7)
- Tips for responsible drinking and where to go next for help (page 8)
- Advice for relatives, friends, partners who are concerned about someone else’s drinking (page 8)

For more information on this resource, to request training and supplies of “Alcohol time to check” please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards.

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In association with Manchester Community Alcohol Team, Manchester Primary Care Trust