

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At a national level the Scottish Government has set a goal of reducing alcohol-related hospital admissions. Additionally, NHS Scotland has 2 local delivery plan standards relating to alcohol: targets for drug and alcohol waiting times and targets for alcohol brief interventions. In 2009 the Scottish Government published a “Framework for Action” to reduce the misuse of alcohol.

The statistics for Scotland, and for Great Britain as a whole, indicate a reduction in the frequency of drinking, and the amount drunk, until 2014 when the proportion of people in Scotland drinking on more than 5 days in a week increased and the proportion of people exceeding the recommended amount on their heaviest drinking day levelled off. There are higher proportions of males in most age groups who drink more often, and in larger quantities, than females. However, in 2016 the proportion of females in the 16-24 year age group who drank more than the recommended 3 units exceeded the proportion of males drinking more than the recommended 4 units on their heaviest drinking day. For all age groups the proportion of “binge” drinkers in Scotland was less than for Great Britain as a whole, and particularly so for females living in Scotland.

There is evidence to suggest that Scotland is achieving one of the four areas for sustained action identified in the “Framework for Action”; reduced alcohol consumption.

Scotland has a higher alcohol-related death rate amongst males compared to other nations within the United Kingdom (around 3% of deaths), but rates have gradually been reducing since 2006. For females the rate is much lower at below 1.5% of all deaths, and is much closer to the figures for England & Wales and Northern Ireland. Moray has a lower proportion of wholly alcohol-related deaths compared to Scotland, although there was a slight upturn during the 5-year period 2012-2016. The highest proportion of alcohol-related deaths in Scotland amongst males was between the ages of 40 and 49 years old, but recently has changed to be the 45 to 54 year old age group (approximately 12% of all deaths).

Moray has the 14th highest alcohol-related death rate of the 32 local authorities in Scotland, with between 15 and 19 of the approximately 1,000 deaths recorded in Moray each year being attributed to alcohol-related conditions. Looking at different areas of Moray there is evidence that more deprived areas (using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) criteria published in 2016) tend to have a greater level of alcohol-related mortality. While not an exact correlation, the intermediate zones in Moray containing a greater proportion of more deprived data zones tend to have higher rates. There are some exceptions to this general trend however, so care must be taken not to over-generalise.

The number of active service users engaged in Moray Alcohol and Drug Partnership (MADP) services for alcohol issues has remained relatively constant over the past 6 quarters and has reduced since the peak in the summer of 2016. The MADP area has a lower rate of alcohol-related hospital stays compared to NHS Grampian and nationally and the rate has been fairly constant since 2014. There are only 4 intermediate zones within Moray that have higher than national rates for this measure. According to NHS Information services Division data the number of patients in hospital with alcohol-related conditions has reduced over the last 10 years.

There are significant differences between the rate of alcohol-related hospital stays between the most- and least- deprived data zones in Moray using the SIMD criteria once more, although there has been a marked improvement from 2012 to 2016. In 2012 the highest rate was three times the national rate, but in 2016 it had reduced to double the national rate. Generally Moray fared better for alcohol-related hospital stays compared to Scotland, but there is a wide range between the intermediate zone with the highest rate of alcohol-related hospital stays (Elgin Cathedral to Ashgrove and Pinefield with a rate twice that of the national average) and the one with the lowest (Rafford, Dallas, Dyke to Dava with a rate one-quarter of the national average). It is worth noting that between 2011 and 2016 there has been a 9% reduction in the rate of alcohol-related hospital stays in both Moray and Scotland.

Data on drinking habits at a local level in Moray have not been found, but for NHS Grampian the proportion of males and females exceeding the recommended weekly limits is half the proportion nationally. Problem drinking³ in NHS Grampian is similar to national levels with around one-quarter of males being identified as problem drinkers and 11% of females. Note, however, that the proportion of males and females in Moray who drink in excess of 14 units per week (classed as hazardous/harmful drinking) are 35% and 17% respectively, which would suggest problem drinking in Moray may be higher than in NHS Grampian.

During the period 2009-2015 the Moray Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) area has consistently recorded a lower rate of attempted murder & serious assault, common assault, vandalism, and breach of the peace compared to Scotland. In most years the Moray ADP rates have been lower than NHS Grampian as well apart from slightly higher rates of attempted murder/serious assaults in 2009, common assaults in 2015, and vandalism in 2014.

Similarly, Police Scotland data indicates that serious assaults remain a fairly infrequent occurrence in Moray, while the number of common assaults has reduced since the peak in November 2015. Threatening and abusive behaviour incidents increased steadily from April 2014 to October 2017, but since then the number of such incidents reported has reduced markedly.

³ Problem drinking is defined by Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) as a score of 8 or more on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)