

**Report to: Health Overview Scrutiny Panel (HOSP)**

**Meeting date: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Report by: Alan Knobel, Alcohol Strategy Co-ordinator**

**Report Title: Address alcohol misuse amongst older people and students**

## **Background**

At previous HOSP meetings the issue of alcohol misuse amongst older people and students has been discussed. The Chair of the HOSP has made a specific request for more information relating to these groups. This report will provide information we have in relation to these groups.

## **Older People**

### Our Invisible Addicts

A report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists<sup>1</sup> highlighted the growing problem of alcohol misuse amongst older people; they state that, "Between 2001 and 2031, there is projected to be a 50% increase in the number of older people in the UK. The percentage of men and women drinking more than the weekly recommended limits has also risen, by 60% in men and 100% in women between 1990 and 2006. Given the likely impact of these two factors on health and social care services, there is now a pressing need to address substance misuse in older people."

Some of the key factors highlighted in this report include:

- Older people may show complex patterns and combinations of substance use (e.g. alcohol plus inappropriate use of prescribed medications)
- Older people use large amounts of prescription and over-the-counter medication and rates of misuse (both intentional and inadvertent) are high, particularly in older women
- Although alcohol use does decline with age, a significant number of older people consume alcohol at dangerous levels
- Among older people, psychosocial factors (including bereavement, retirement, boredom, loneliness, homelessness and depression) are all associated with higher rates of alcohol use
- Because of physiological changes associated with ageing, older people are at increased risk of adverse physical effects of substance misuse, even at relatively modest levels of intake

### Local statistics

Approximately 14% of the Portsmouth population is over the age of 65, however this age group makes up a much smaller proportion of the people within our alcohol treatment services.

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<sup>1</sup> Our Invisible Addicts (2011) - Royal College of Psychiatrists

## Alcohol treatment data - 2011/12<sup>2</sup>

Portsmouth (n. 159 over 55)	Male	Female
65+	3%	1%
60-64	5%	3%
55-59	7%	3%
Hampshire (n. 302 over 55)		
65+	4%	2%
60-64	4%	2%
55-59	5%	3%
National		
65+	2%	1%
60-64	3%	2%
55-59	4%	3%

### Local Services

In addition to our specialist treatment services Portsmouth has developed services which are more tailored to the needs of older people as they are in non-specialist addiction settings. These include the Alcohol Interventions Team (AIT) that see patients within their own GP surgery, at local hospitals and in other neutral venues. In 2012 the AIT received a total of 1592 referrals. Of these, 177 (11%) were for 65+ and 254 (16%) were for 55-64. These figures show a far higher level of involvement amongst older people than within the specialist treatment services.

As part of the Public Health development work the provision of alcohol advice within pharmacies was developed. As previously referenced in this report older people have a higher level of use of prescribed medication, therefore pharmacies are a good setting in which to pro-actively work with older people concerning their drinking. This service has a much higher level of involvement by older persons. Of the 5114 alcohol interactions recorded by pharmacies in 2012, 871 (17%) were 65+, 321 (6%) were 60-64 and 282 (5.5%) were 55-59.<sup>3</sup>

A further service which supports a greater number of older people is the Alcohol Specialist Nurse Service at Queen Alexandra Hospital. This service provides treatment to Portsmouth and Hampshire residents admitted to hospital, often not directly linked to alcohol, who are then identified with an alcohol problem. The table below highlights the ASNS data for the time period 1/4/12 to 30/9/12, the most up to date data available<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> National Alcohol Treatment Monitoring System

<sup>3</sup> During 2012 pharmacies had a total of 5114 interactions about alcohol. Of these 58% (n.2945) were screened as low risk, however 42% (2169) were identified as increasing or high risk. Of these 30% (1531) refused to attend an advice session, but were provided with an advice leaflet. 597 (12%) did receive structured advice and 41 (1%) agreed to be referred to specialist services.

<sup>4</sup> National Alcohol Treatment Monitoring System

## Alcohol Specialist Nurse Service data

<b>Portsmouth</b> Total 353 patients (all ages)	Male	Female
65+	23 (7%)	3 (1%)
60-64	20 (6%)	11 (3%)
55-59	29 (8%)	13 (4%)
<b>Hampshire</b> Total 306 patients (all ages)		
65+	30 (10%)	8 (3%)
60-64	17 (6%)	9 (3%)
55-59	25 (8%)	9 (3%)

## National Treatment Agency Stock-take

The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse has recently completed a 'stock-take' of our alcohol prevention and treatment services. Whilst mostly very positive about the work in Portsmouth, including the services referenced above, they have identified some areas of work which we should consider. Areas relevant to older people include:

- Increase training, knowledge and the implementation of 'Identification and Brief Advice' within Adult Social Care
- Develop a better understanding of the needs of older people (through needs assessment work)

Adult Social Care are currently considering how best to roll out training and an improvement of alcohol screening, advice and referral. The needs of older people has been added to the Public Health Intelligence team's forward work plan.

## **Students**

Whilst students' drinking is highlighted in the media, often linked to anti-social behaviour and public drunkenness, in terms of health their impact is more limited than older drinkers. Students are more typically regarded as binge drinkers, more likely to have acute conditions caused by accidents or alcohol poisoning, rather than chronic long term conditions, such as alcoholic liver disease.

We have no data relating to students' attendance at A&E dept. or admissions to hospital, as this status is not recorded. Likewise we have limited data relating to students involvement in our treatment or advice services as this status is not routinely recorded. Anecdotal evidence from our services suggests only a handful of students will access them in any year.

The website Studentbeans.com conducted a survey<sup>5</sup> of students across the country and developed a 'Drinking League table'. This placed the University of Portsmouth students 32 out of 74, with an average weekly consumption of 19 units per week. Although this is not a rigorous academic survey, it does give an indication that students are in the most case not 'high risk' drinkers, but may be binge drinkers that could get into some difficult whilst drunk. The survey found that nationally:

- 37% could not remember how they got home after a night out
- One in two have missed a lecture or seminar because they drank too much the night before
- 47% of non-drinking students wish alcohol wasn't such a big part of university life
- More than a third have been injured after drinking

Generally, alcohol, tobacco and drug consumption by students is amongst the highest of any groups in society. However, it is most likely that these patterns of consumption are short lived and often end when the person leaves university and enters the world of work, starts a family etc.

The University of Portsmouth do provide information to students about alcohol and where to get help both through their website and their welfare services. In addition advice services are provided with space during Fresher's week to provide new students with safer drinking information.

The University Surgery, which registers a large number of students each year, does screen all new patients for alcohol consumption. This has led to a number of patients receiving structured alcohol advice and a very small number of referrals to specialist services. The Alcohol Interventions Team works closely with this surgery, to be on hand during Fresher week provide alcohol information and advice.

## **Conclusion**

There is a growing recognition both locally and nationally that the needs of older people and alcohol misuse, requires more understanding. Portsmouth has expanded provision, which means we are supporting more older people locally than average, however there is recognition that we can do more.

Whilst some work is being undertaken with students concerning their drinking, this is not a priority group in terms of the main costs to the NHS and other services. Other groups are far more costly in terms of health, criminal justice and social care.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.studentbeans.com/student101/a/Universities/university-drinking-league-3370.html>