

# Drinkaware organisational strategy

2023 - 2025



# Introduction

**Karen Tyrell – CEO Drinkaware**

**Welcome to the new Drinkaware strategy.**

This is an exciting time for Drinkaware with a new Chair, new Chief Executive and new trustees, all with a shared sense of purpose to reduce alcohol harm in the UK.

I can see how important Drinkaware is to the public.

In 2022, there were over 5m visits to our website, over 117,000 downloads of the myDrinkaware app and our award-winning chatbot uses AI technology to support around 5,000 people every month.

We believe that we have a shared responsibility for the culture of the society we want to live in. The world around us matters. As such, real partnership is vital to achieve the scale of change that we want to make.

Working together with the alcohol industry, government, researchers, academics, charities and others will allow us to make tangible change to the UK's drinking culture so more people can lead healthy, happy lives.

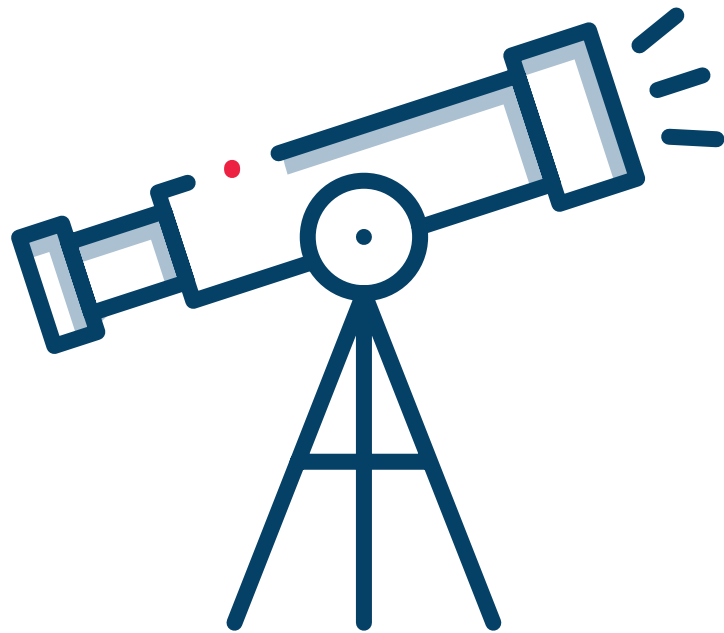
**Karen Tyrell – Chief Executive**



January 2023



# Our vision



**Working together  
to reduce alcohol  
harm across the UK**

# Our mission



Using our expertise to give governments, industry, communities and individuals the knowledge and support to make informed decisions about alcohol and how to reduce the harm it can cause.

Delivered through:

- Public-facing campaigns and digital services, information and guidance
- Evidence-led advice to governments and industry
- Independent research, consumer insight and evaluation

**Goal 1 >**

# **Working together to reduce alcohol harm**

**We'll partner with governments, industry and others to move towards systemic and sustainable change at scale, to improve society's relationship with alcohol**

- **We know we cannot achieve our vision alone. We want to work in partnership with governments in all four nations, the alcohol industry, academics and researchers in order to achieve the change we want to see.**
- **We will continue to be independent, to enable us to give advice, information and guidance, based on the evidence.**

## Goal 2 >

# Voice

**We'll become a leading voice in conversations around alcohol and use our voice to stand up for people who experience alcohol harm**

- **To be a leading voice, we don't need to be loud but we are happy to speak up when there is evidence to support our position and when people seek our opinion.**
- **We will continue to invest in the Drinkaware brand, to ensure high levels of trust and public awareness.**

**Goal 3 >**

# **Information and support**

**We'll ensure the public can make conscious, informed choices about alcohol and can find help if they need it**

- **We will provide clear, evidence-based information about alcohol.**
- **We will provide tools to help people moderate their drinking and will signpost people to sources of support if they need it.**
- **We will deliver public facing campaigns to ensure the public get the facts about alcohol.**

**Goal 4 >**

# Research and expertise

**We'll become the trusted experts in our field, generating and sharing knowledge and insight**

- **We will commission research into under-explored areas where we can fill the gaps in the evidence-base, increase our knowledge and share that knowledge more widely.**
- **We will continue to monitor the external environment to ensure we are aware of how, where and how much alcohol people are buying and consuming.**



## Goal 5 >

# Infrastructure

**We'll be a great place to work, with simple, effective systems and a sustainable income**

- **We want to be a great place to work so we can recruit and retain the best staff who are committed to working together to reduce alcohol harm in the UK**
- **We will ensure we have sufficient income to deliver on our strategy**

# Our values



## Solid Reasoning

We seek and use both hard evidence and expert insight to shape our work and inform our voice.

## Clarity with Empathy

To reduce alcohol harm and strengthen informed choice, we make every effort to communicate clearly and constructively, and express our thoughts with care to make a positive difference.

## Principled Partnership

We work with others to maximise impact, whilst exercising our independence, to deliver on our purpose.

## Understanding & Connecting

In every aspect of our work, we support people by listening well and focusing on what matters most to them, we embrace each individual's unique situation, perspectives and skills.

## Determination & Curiosity

Determined to meet challenges together, we adapt to discover fresh and more effective ways to work by being open to learning and flexible in our response.

# Background and context

Set up in 2006  
as a catalyst for  
cross-sector  
organisations to  
work together

Committed to  
reducing alcohol  
harm via an industry  
funding model

Alcohol harm,  
use and trends  
have shifted  
over time

We now need to  
work with and  
through others to  
deliver change  
at scale

**Drinkaware was set up in 2006, through discussions between the alcohol industry and government. At the time, alcohol was a major public issue with concerns about binge drinking and alcohol-fuelled social disorder regularly in the news.**

The world has changed a lot since then. Many things have improved, particularly the number of young people choosing to drink less, and a reduction in drink driving. However, some trends are moving in the wrong direction, including the rise in alcohol-specific deaths in 2021 and 2020.

The way people purchase and consume alcohol has changed, with more people drinking at home and more alcohol bought online. There is also a significant increase in the uptake of low alcohol and alcohol free products.

We know there is more to do and that Drinkaware still has a vital role, working with its partners in the alcohol industry, government and charities, in reducing alcohol harm in society.

# Our strategic direction

We are moving from a focus on individual behaviour change, to societal change. Many factors influence behaviour, including individual motivation, the wider environment and policy and regulation. We want to see change at a societal level, and create a future where people who choose to drink can make informed choices about their drinking and do it in a low-risk way.

**Moving  
from**

Direct behaviour change

A focus on health harm  
from alcohol

A focus on risky drinkers

Delivering on our own



**To a wider focus  
which includes:**

Change at a societal level

All alcohol harm, including on  
family, friends, finances  
and worrying about others

A mass audience of all adults  
affected by alcohol harm

Delivering with and  
through others

## Vision

Working together to reduce alcohol harm across the UK

drinkaware

## Mission

Using our expertise to give government, industry, communities and individuals the knowledge and support to make informed decisions about alcohol and how to reduce the harm it can cause. Delivered through:

- Public-facing campaigns and digital services, information and guidance
- Evidence-led advice to governments and industry
- Independent research, consumer insight and evaluation

## Goals

### 1. Working together to reduce alcohol harm

We'll partner with governments, industry and others to move towards systemic and sustainable change at scale, to improve society's relationship with alcohol.

### 2. Voice

We'll become a leading voice in conversations around alcohol and use our voice to stand up for people who experience alcohol harm.

### 3. Information and support

We'll ensure the public can make conscious, informed choices about alcohol and can find help if they need it.

### 4. Research and expertise

We'll become the trusted experts in our field, generating and sharing knowledge and insight.

### 5. Infrastructure

We'll be a great place to work, with simple, effective systems and a sustainable income.

## Values

**Solid Reasoning** - We seek and use both hard evidence and expert insight to shape our work and inform our voice.

**Clarity with Empathy** - To reduce alcohol harm and strengthen informed choice, we make every effort to communicate clearly and constructively, and express our thoughts with care to make a positive difference.

**Understanding and Connecting** - In every aspect of our work, we support people by listening well and focusing on what matters most to them, we embrace each individual's unique situation, perspectives and skills.

**Principled Partnership** - We work with others to maximise impact, whilst exercising our independence, to deliver on our purpose.

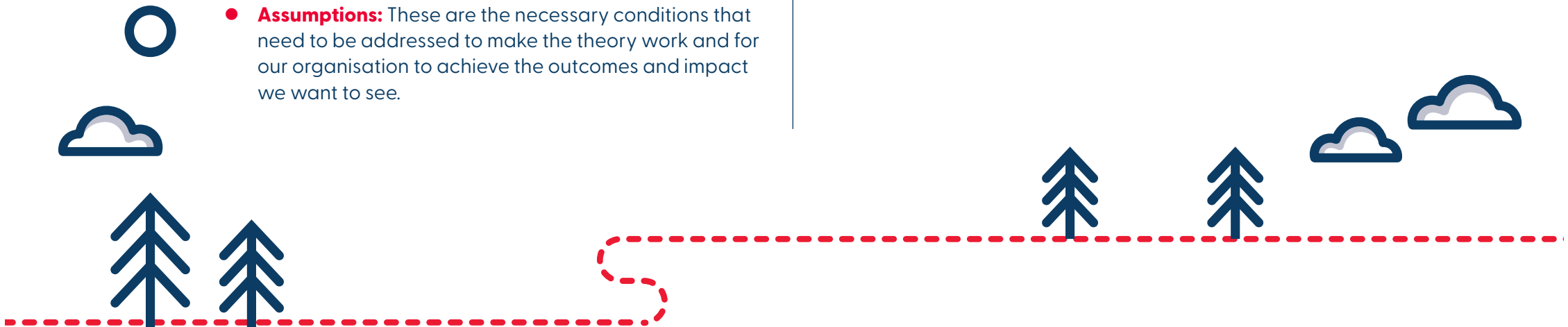
**Determination and Curiosity** - Determined to meet challenges together, we adapt to discover fresh and more effective ways to work by being open to learning and flexible in our response.

# Our theory of change

Drinkaware's theory of change is a map describing how a positive, desired and significant change – or impact – is likely to take place. It is our best approximation of our route to impact.

We use the following terms in our theory of change:

- **Impact:** This is the sustained significant change that our work contributes towards. We do not deliver this alone but work in a context with other institutions and collectively bring about this impact.
- **Outcomes:** These are the specific changes that our activities build towards.
- **Our goals:** Our four-outward facing goals in our strategy that shape our activities.
- **Assumptions:** These are the necessary conditions that need to be addressed to make the theory work and for our organisation to achieve the outcomes and impact we want to see.
- **Our sphere of control:** changes that we are responsible for that can be generated in the short-to-mid-term.
- **Our sphere of influence:** changes that we cannot control but can still influence through partnerships that can be generated in the mid-to-long term.
- **Our sphere of interest:** larger-scale structural changes that we cannot directly influence but can work towards as a sector.



## Drinkaware's sphere of control and influence

### Goals:

Drinkaware outward-facing goals 2023-25

We'll become a leading voice in conversations around alcohol and use our voice to stand up for people who experience alcohol harm.


We'll partner with governments, industry and others to move towards systemic and sustainable change at scale, to improve society's relationship with alcohol.


We'll ensure the public can make conscious, informed choices about alcohol and can find help if they need it.

We'll become the trusted experts in our field, generating and sharing knowledge and insight.


### Sphere of control:


Represents where Drinkaware can directly effect the most change


More people understand their own risk level. 

More people know the UK CMOs' low risk drinking guidelines. 

More people among under-served communities are reached and supported to reduce their risk of alcohol harm. 

Drinkaware engages the alcohol industry with information and analysis to support and enable their efforts to reduce alcohol harm. 

People are able to have conversations about their and others' drinking which lead to positive changes in understanding and behaviour. 

More people are aware of techniques that can help them moderate their alcohol consumption. 


### Sphere of influence:

Beyond our direct control - where Drinkaware can work to influence other organisations, sectors and parts of society


People have a greater number of positive roles models who drink at lower risk levels.

The stigma around admitting to having concerns about alcohol consumption is reduced.

Healthcare professionals make time for and prioritise conversations about alcohol with their patients when necessary.

Policy makers and those delivering services have compelling analysis and evidence to make positive shifts in policy/services. 

People are supported by their employers to have a greater number of informed conversations at work that promote lower risk drinking.

People are supported by their families, friends, and networks to use techniques to drink at lower risk levels. 

### Sphere of (mutual) interest:

Where structural change occurs beyond the control of any one single organisation or sector

No matter where people drink, moderation strategies are normalised.

When people do drink, they are not doing so to cope with their problems.

There is more support for those who seek professional help to moderate their alcohol consumption.

The social pressure to drink at higher or increasing risk levels is reduced.

Lower risk drinking is the new trendsetting norm.

### IMPACT:

More people drink within the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) low risk drinking guidelines, more often and for more of the time.

Short- to mid-term changes

Mid- to longer-term changes

Longer-term changes

## Key assumptions

As a small and nimble organisation we can be a catalyst for change.

Drinkaware remains focused on adult drinking and supports others to tackle under-age drinking.


Beyond reach, our digital tools are effective in supporting behavioural change.

People's willingness to talk to each other tackles social stigma and makes a difference to risky drinking behaviours.

Knowledge is a building block in willingness to change behaviour around risky drinking.

Drinkaware is capable of working in partnership with key stakeholders who want to work with us and have the capacity to deliver these outcomes.

Understanding views and experiences of the public and of the healthcare burden and social costs leads to positive policy shifts in government, the healthcare sector and the industry.

 Key outcome

Underpinning

Behaviour change

Partnership/Influence

Impact

# Our planned impact

**More people drink within the Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines, more often and for more of the time.**



In our 2023–5 strategy we outlined a strategic shift. While we remain focused on informing and supporting individuals to drink at lower risk levels, we are also actively generating positive change in the wider cultural environment, and working towards a future where lower-risk drinking is the social norm in the UK.

**As a nation, we've not had a conversation about alcohol in a long time.**

When Drinkaware was set up in 2006, the conversation was predominantly about the harm from binge drinking<sup>1</sup>. Now, it needs to be about the increasing polarisation of the UK's drinking, with around nine million adults in the UK drinking at increasing or high risk levels<sup>2</sup>, and one in four adults worried about someone else's drinking<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Drugs and Alcohol Unit (2012) The Government's Alcohol Strategy. The Home Office. Retrieved from <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a755606ed915d7314959292/alcohol-strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Drinkaware Monitor, 2023

<sup>3</sup> ibid





Many drinkers will have felt pressure to drink to fit in, or will have found it hard to explain why they might be cutting down. Drinkaware wants to shift these social norms and attitudes so that, for people who choose to drink, it's easier for them to do so in a low risk way. For those drinking at higher risk levels, the shift in these social norms can help them reach out, talk to others, receive help and join the 80% of UK drinkers who report that they already drink within the UK Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines.

The normalising of lower-risk drinking marks a broadening of the strategic focus of Drinkaware and a widening of our impact horizon – but we know this shift is unlikely to happen in a three-year strategic period.

Many factors can contribute to a societal shift in drinking behaviour, including access to professional support and evidence-based policymaking.

Key to this societal shift are informed and supportive social networks, including friends, work colleagues, family and online communities, that can assist people in implementing lower-risk drinking strategies or seeking professional help.

This social shift can contribute to reducing stigma, making it easier for individuals to openly discuss their drinking and feel comfortable seeking help when necessary.

Drinkaware created its theory of change to set out how we can harness the trust the public has in our evidence-led advice and guidance. It will help us understand where we are making progress and generating positive change in social norms.

**Drinkaware's theory of change** would not have been possible without the contributions from representatives in academia, charities and civil society groups and service users, government, public health, and industry, as well as Drinkaware trustees and staff. Developed with National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in consultation with these key stakeholders, this theory of change collectively represents our clearest route to impact.

# drinkaware

**Drinkaware's new strategy will run for three years, from January 2023 to December 2025.**

In 2024, we will check in on progress and explore whether the external environment has made any changes necessary. We will be reaching out to our stakeholders for their insight in developing this.

In 2023, we developed our theory of change. This defines how what we do is expected to lead to the change we want to see.

If you have questions, thoughts or feedback on our strategy for the next three years, or would like to partner with us please email [contact@drinkaware.co.uk](mailto:contact@drinkaware.co.uk)

Thank you for supporting us in our vision of working together to reduce alcohol harm across the UK.

**For more information, visit [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)**

