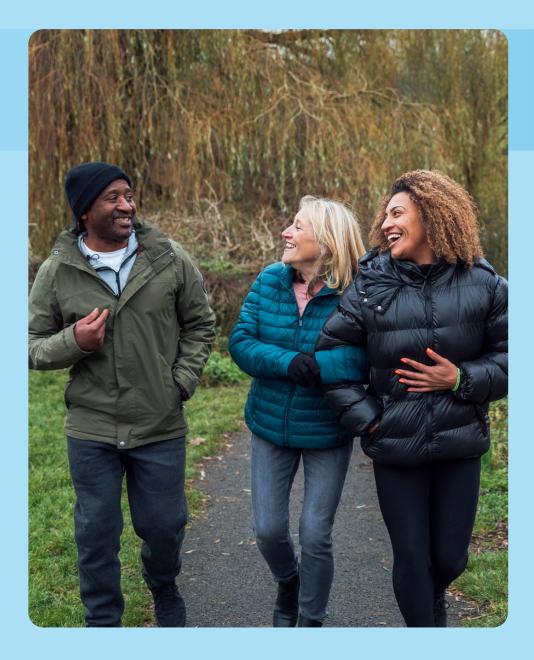
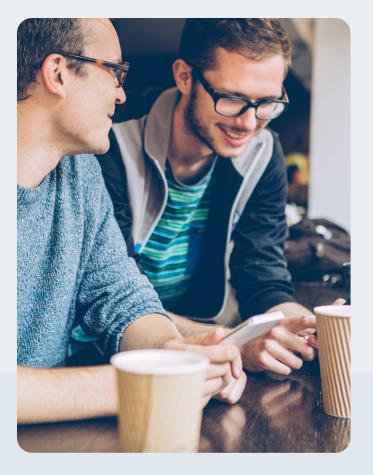


# Impact Report 2021 Continuing to change lives



# Contents





**This is an interactive document** Navigate through the different sections of the guide using the links in the top bar and buttons below.



## Drinkaware 2021 Our year in numbers



#### 1.1m+ 51.3% People have used one of the UK population of our digital tools are familiar with the Drinkaware brand Ś d. 1,250 5.76 million 50%+ 0.5m+ **Pieces of media** visitors to our website. coverage across print, of people completing the www.drinkaware.co.uk online and broadcast Our blogs and press Self-Assessment tool were channels releases were viewed either high-risk or possibly over half-a-million times dependent drinkers $\Theta$ • 2,735 10,216 2/min +520% participants of Drinkaware at Work, people used our delivered by 13 organisations chatbot between Two people completed one increase in YouTube September and of our tools every minute views to 909,000 views December 2021

## Foreword from the Chief Executive

## Foreword from the Chief Executive



**Shān Nicholas** Interim Chief Executive

Despite 2021 being another year of turbulence due to the pandemic, Drinkaware remained true to its purpose of reducing alcohol harm in the UK. I joined in November, taking over from Elaine Hindal who had been Chief Executive for nine years. I was able to build on the work she had led to keep the organisation moving forward during the disruption and to help the team plan for the future. I have been impressed by the commitment, professionalism and resilience of the whole Drinkaware team, including our staff, stakeholders, funders, independent medical advisors, committees and Trustees.

## Over 51% of the UK population are familiar with the Drinkaware brand.<sup>1</sup>

As always, we used research and evidence to inform our work. Our annual Monitor report in 2021 gave further insight into the impact of the pandemic on the nation's drinking. We saw that the polarisation between high-risk and low-risk drinkers, first observed in 2020, continued. It also revealed that high-risk drinkers were most likely to report drinking more and drinking more often, compared to before the pandemic. Our recontact survey allowed us to go back to respondents of the Monitor and we found that less than half (46%) of drinkers who planned to cut back on alcohol after restrictions were lifted had stuck to their plan. Our research findings were picked up by national news outlets including Mail Online, The Independent and the Evening Standard, and broadcast on Sky News. Given the intermittent lockdowns during the year, it is not surprising that people turned again to our digital services and online content. There were 5.76 million visitors to the website, a 500% increase in YouTube views and our blogs and press releases were viewed over half-a-million times as people searched for evidence-based information from a familiar and trusted source.





In 2021, 250,991 people completed the Drinkaware Self-Assessment tool and 51% were either high-risk or possibly dependent drinkers.<sup>2</sup> We learned in 2020 that we need to be responsive to change and this need for flexibility has continued. Activities that would have been delivered in person, such as our Drinkaware at Work alcohol awareness training programme, moved to a mix of e-learning and group workshops. Other highlights included the 'Change Starts with You' marketing campaign we launched in the autumn to promote our digital tools. The campaign led to nearly 165,000 people completing an assessment of their drinking habits and has since been shortlisted for an award in the 2022 European Search Awards.

As we evaluated our programmes, we began to see evidence that we were reaching a disproportionately high number of those drinking at risky levels, particularly through our MyDrinkaware app and our chatbot. Being able to reach those most at risk of harm means that we can give them the information, tools and advice they need to help them reduce their drinking. There were also changes within the organisation. In response to Covid-19 and the knock-on impacts to our funding, we introduced a new structure to the team. We also took the opportunity during these changes to re-examine the culture at Drinkaware to ensure we can be a modern. inclusive and flexible employer which is able to adapt quickly to challenges. We have been listening to our staff, partners and stakeholders and are revisiting and reviewing our values in response to the feedback. To capture the voices of all employees, we introduced a quarterly staff survey which allows employees to feedback anonymously on a range of issues and provides the Senior Leadership Team with data to track progress over time.

I will be handing over to a permanent Chief Executive later in 2022, who will lead Drinkaware through the coming years. Next year will see the rollout of our new organisational values, refinement of our digital products, a deeper look at our audiences, and the launch of a new strategy.



# Drinking trends in 2021

Research and data are key to ensuring our advice and content are informed by the best available evidence. As well as commissioning our own research into areas where no research is available, we monitor the research of other organisations to gain valuable insight into the UK's drinking behaviour and how it changes over time.





The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions brought changes in alcohol consumption and drinking behaviour for many UK drinkers – not just how much<sup>3,4,5</sup> or frequently they drank,<sup>6</sup> but also where,<sup>7,8</sup> what,<sup>9</sup> and why they drank.<sup>10,11</sup>

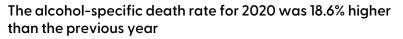
## Increased consumption among those most at risk

Since the onset of the pandemic, we observed a polarisation in drinking behaviour, where the proportion of UK adults who reported drinking more than they would usually prior to the pandemic was similar to the proportion who reported drinking less.<sup>12,13</sup> And while population level data, such as alcohol sales (from duty receipts<sup>14</sup> and off-trade grocery sales<sup>15</sup>) remained largely unchanged from previous years, this masked significant variation within groups. Specifically, we witnessed large increases in alcohol consumption among high-risk and possibly dependent drinkers (those considered to be most at risk of alcohol-related harm) – a finding also reported elsewhere.<sup>16,17</sup>

## Sharp rise in alcohol mortality

Data from the Office for National Statistics in 2020 recorded an 18.6% increase in alcohol-specific deaths compared to 2019 - the highest yearon-year increase in 20 years.<sup>18</sup> The rise was driven primarily by the increase in deaths from alcohol-related liver disease – a chronic alcohol-related condition – and as such, probably attributable to those with a previous history of alcohol misuse or dependence. There are several likely reasons for this spike - not least the severe disruption to health and support services, as attention turned to Covid-19 - but also changes in people's habits and circumstances.

Many alcohol support organisations moved their services online, which while suitable for some, also meant other people were left without the support they needed. Similarly, for individuals on the brink of dependence before the pandemic, many may have



Age-standardised rate per 100,000

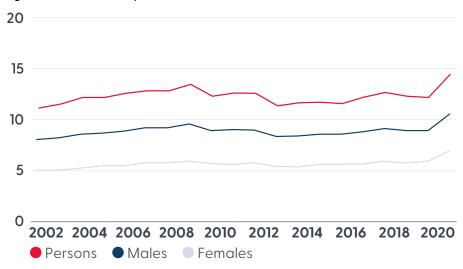


Chart: Office for National Statistics – Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK: registered in 2020, National Records of Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

been triggered by job loss, insecurity, bereavement, or strained relationships. There was also a reluctance to overburden the NHS during the initial phases of the pandemic, and this resulted in many without access to treatment or support. In addition, with social restrictions in place, many individuals lost access to vital support networks, which may have led to the development of maladaptive coping habits among some. Maladaptive coping mechanisms are behaviours

that make us feel better in the short term, but in the long term they are very harmful. They include eating disorders, self-harm, alcohol and substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, shoplifting, risk-taking behaviour and compulsive lying. Our own research identified strong associations between increased alcohol consumption and mental health problems.<sup>19,20</sup> The increase in alcohol-related harm is not unique to the pandemic. There have been increasing trends for alcohol-related deaths and hospital admissions - particularly for alcoholrelated liver disease – since 2017 in England, suggesting that the pandemic has accelerated an existing trend, rather than created a new one. While there was a reduction in hospital admission rates (not just for alcohol, but all conditions) in 2020/21 compared with previous years, alcohol-related hospital admissions have been on the increase in England – with admission rates in 2019/20 2% higher than in 2018/19, and 8% higher than in 2016/17.<sup>21</sup>

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities indicates that 17.5% of adults in England – the equivalent of 7.7 million people – were drinking at "increasing or higher risk" levels in the three months to the end of January 2022.<sup>22</sup> This compares to 12.4% (or about 6 million people) in February 2020, and 11.9% (or about 5 million people) in October 2019. For many, alcohol consumption is showing little sign of returning to pre-pandemic levels.

## Uneven impacts of the pandemic

The uneven impacts of the pandemic have been widely reported<sup>23,24</sup> and alcohol-related health harms were no exception. Alcohol harm already disproportionately impacts individuals living in the most deprived communities in what has been termed the 'alcohol harm paradox',<sup>25</sup> and available data indicates that the pandemic has exacerbated this disparity further.

For example, more than half of hospital admissions (58%) and deaths (57%) from liver disease in 2020 in England occurred in the most deprived 40% of the population.<sup>26</sup> This is despite adults in the most deprived communities reporting consuming, on average, similar or lower levels of alcohol consumption than those in the least deprived areas. Similar trends can be observed across the devolved nations.<sup>27,28</sup> In Scotland, for example, the alcohol-specific death rate in 2020 was over four times higher in most deprived areas.<sup>28</sup> Alcohol harm is a clear wider impact of the pandemic, and therefore needs to be made a priority in the recovery. Failing this, the health burden in subsequent years will be substantial. We continue our call for alcohol harm reduction strategies to be placed at the centre of public health priorities across the four nations of the UK.

Alcohol harm is a clear wider impact of the pandemic, and therefore needs to be made a priority in the recovery.

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# Reaching people through digital channels

A key pillar of our strategy has been a focus on reaching people through digital channels, including our website, email and digital marketing through social media and search campaigns, apps which sit on people's smartphones and digital 'tools' which help users to become more aware of what they are drinking. Digital channels enable us to more efficiently reach a large number of people and allows us to track behaviour, keep in contact with people and make sure they have access to the most up-to-date advice and information.

This emphasis on digital became even more important in 2020 and 2021 as lockdowns and uncertainty meant that people often could not access face-to-face services.

Lockdowns and uncertainty meant that people often could not access face-to-face services.

••



purchased alcohol, as people began

delivery services, and then drank it in

increasing our focus on digital tools, to

reach the maximum number of people.

We responded to this shift by

their homes.<sup>30</sup>

to buy more alcohol online or via online

Research from Deloitte<sup>29</sup> showed that people were becoming more comfortable moving online for activities and services which have traditionally been delivered face to face, from shopping to doctor's visits to training courses. This shift was played out in the way people

We also moved some of our face-to-face products online, such as our alcohol awareness training programme, Drinkaware at Work. Participants across the UK completed the course either through e-learning sessions or through group workshops, depending on the regulations at the time.

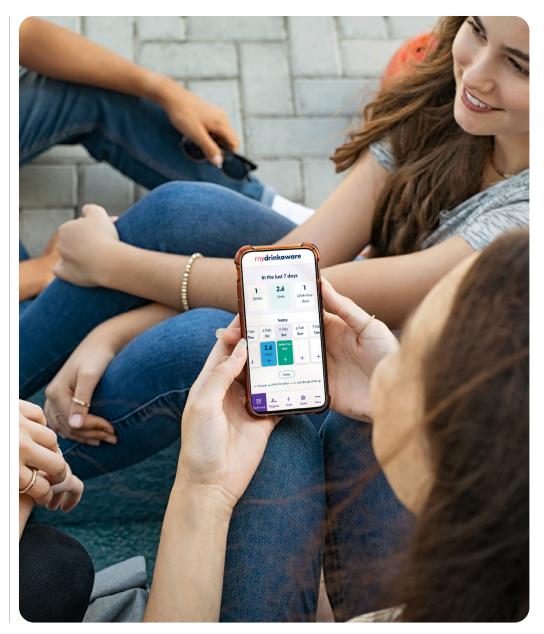
#### Reaching people through digital channels

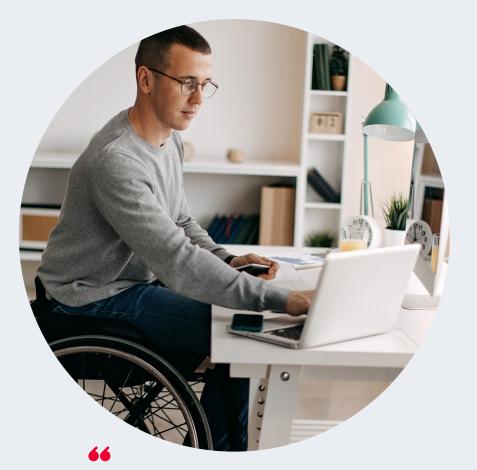
#### **Tools and products**

Our range of digital products (which we call 'tools') continue to help users assess, track and set goals to reduce their drinking:

- Unit and Calorie Calculator: This tool calculates the total number of calories and units in an alcoholic drink or consumed across a week.
- Self-Assessment (uses the full AUDIT test for alcohol dependence): This consists of ten questions that assess how much alcohol people drink and whether their drinking could have an impact on their health. It is regarded as the 'gold standard' screening questionnaire for detecting hazardous and harmful drinking. AUDIT is short for Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test; it was developed by the World Health Organization and adapted for use in the UK.
- Digital Scratchcard (uses the AUDIT-C test for alcohol consumption): There are three questions (a shortened version of the full AUDIT), with results presented as a score within a risk band.

- Drink Compare Calculator (weekly units): Assesses a user's risk level based on their weekly unit consumption and frequency. It compares their drinking to that of the UK population and summarises calories consumed from alcohol.
- **MyDrinkaware App:** A smartphone app which consumers can download for free. It allows people to keep track of how much they are drinking, drink-free days, the quality of their sleep and understand how many calories they are consuming from alcohol. They can also use the app to fill out the Self-Assessment to assess their risk of alcohol dependency.
- **Chatbot:** Our interactive tool is a virtual assistant which uses AI technology to deliver personalised information and refer high-risk drinkers and those in crisis to the appropriate alcohol support services. It is available 24/7 and is increasingly being used in the evenings when other services are unavailable.





In 2021, 5.76 million people visited the Drinkaware website to access the most up-to-date information, advice and support around alcohol.

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### **Reaching risky drinkers**

Our focus on reaching people through digital channels and products has responded to new ways of working and societal changes accelerated by the pandemic, and we also see it as an effective way to reach many more people. In 2021, we observed that our drinking assessment tools are being used disproportionately by people who are drinking at risky levels. Being able to reach these people with tools, information and support is key to our being able to reduce alcohol harm in the UK. In 2021, 250,991 people completed the Drinkaware Self-Assessment tool, 51% of which were either high-risk or possibly dependent drinkers.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Targeting specific groups**

Digital campaigns also allow us to target specific groups which may otherwise not be reached, or groups which experience a disproportionate burden of alcohol harm. During 2021, we ran targeted digital campaigns to test our reach with LGBTQ+ groups, young people and those from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This helped us to work out the best way to reach these groups and how best to offer them information and tools to help them reduce their drinking. This gave us valuable insight which will also help to inform future campaigns when we are targeting specific audiences.

#### **Engaging with our audiences**

In 2021, we increased our email marketing activities to improve how we engage with our audiences and provide continual support to people wanting to drink less and to reduce their risk of alcohol harm. It means we can communicate with them more regularly via email and on other platforms such as social media, providing tailored, relevant information and support to help them track and reduce their drinking. Working together to increase our impact

# Working together to increase our impact



Our vision to reduce alcohol-related harm by helping people make better choices about their drinking can only be realised if we work in partnership with our stakeholders.

Effectively delivered partnerships enable us to amplify our message and increase our ability to reach those in need. They also make it possible for us to support other organisations and broaden our reach, including those working face-to-face, in areas of deprivation and/or serving particularly hard to reach or digitally excluded audiences.

Drinkaware at Work is our training programme, developed in response to organisations who wanted to support their staff with alcohol awareness training.

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**Drinkaware at Work** 

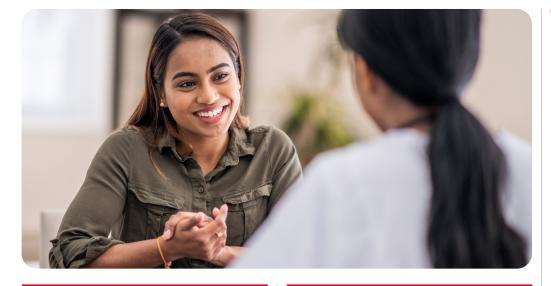
Drinkaware at Work is our training programme, developed in response to requests from organisations which wanted to support their staff with alcohol awareness training. In 2021, we delivered training to 2,735 participants across the UK. When the pandemic started and face-to-face training was not possible, we delivered the courses through a combination of e-learning sessions and group workshops. At the end of this report is a list of some of our Drinkaware at Work clients.

Our Drinkaware at Work campaign won an award at the Northern Digital Awards for best Business to Business campaign, working in partnership with our digital marketing agency CTI Digital.

> **2,735** participants were given training across the UK by Drinkaware at Work in 2021.



Working together to increase our impact



#### Identification and Brief Advice (IBA)

IBA interventions are designed to engage members of the public and help them understand how much alcohol they are drinking. The sessions are short and are usually delivered face to face. We worked in partnership with Budweiser, training staff through the Drinkaware at Work programme and jointly delivering 250 face to face sessions in shopping centres in Greater Manchester in November 2021.9% of the people we spoke to were high-risk drinkers, and 42% were at increasing risk. In response to the pandemic, we have also developed 'digital IBAs' (which we call 'Digital Scratchcards').

## Nightlife Crew

Nightlife Crew is an alcohol vulnerability education programme, tailored to the night-time economy. It is designed to support staff in pubs, venues and the wider environment to spot signs of alcohol vulnerability and know the appropriate steps to take. To reach the maximum number of people and to support the re-opening of pubs, bars and restaurants post-lockdown, we made the e-learning version of Nightlife Crew available for free to our funders and National Pubwatch Members in partnership with Pubwatch.

#### Home and Dry campaign

In December, Drinkaware invited on-trade (i.e. pubs and venues) owners and managers to claim free information packs as part of our drink-driving campaign, Home and Dry. These packs contained posters, beermats, leaflets and virtual assets. The campaign was designed to assist on-trade venues encouraging designated drivers to go alcohol-free. Almost 500 venues across the UK received Home and Dry campaign packs.

> Almost 500 venues across the UK received Home and Dry campaign packs.

#### **Uber Eats partnership**

We were approached by Uber Eats to work with it to create guidance for its drivers who were delivering alcohol alongside food orders. We advised Uber and created an educational video. This video is part of the training and induction process for new and existing drivers. It gives drivers information on whether the customer can receive the alcohol ordered and when the delivery needs to be returned; for example, if the customer appears drunk or underage.

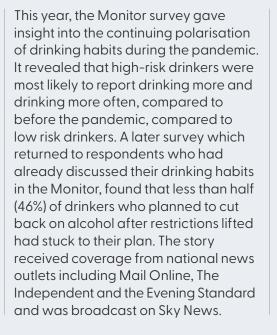
With the increased take-up of delivery services over the pandemic, we recognise that there are many new companies now operating in this space and we are actively looking to work with more organisations like Uber Eats.



# Reaching and communicating with our audiences

To continue to reduce alcohol harm, we want our information and advice to be available to as many people as possible.

Having a strong presence in the media allows us to reach more people and give them the facts about alcohol. It also means that we can keep alcohol front of mind as a part of the national conversation and can draw attention to worrying trends and share key findings. As we have been providing independent, evidence-based information and advice on drinking for over 15 years, we are often asked to comment on media stories in the press. We also release our own media stories based on our research, such as our annual UK-wide Monitor survey into the nation's drinking habits.



46%

of drinkers who planned to cut back on alcohol after restrictions lifted had stuck to their plan.

Our media activity in 2021 ranged from national radio and television to regional magazines targeted at different communities. With our overall objective of reducing alcohol harm, we focused on three themes: supporting people who were furloughed or working from home during the pandemic, promoting our new digital tools, and exploring the growing concern around drink spiking. The second year of Covid -19 continued to be a central part of our media activity in 2021. Our focus on charting the change in alcohol consumption during furlough and increased working from home for some sections of the population led to an increase in demand for us to comment on these changes. We wanted to keep the focus on reducing alcohol-related harm and highlight worrying trends in the media. We were also part of discussions on flexible working, and the movement back into workplaces led to articles focusing on the importance of a more inclusive work culture.

Towards the end of 2021, drink spiking became a more prominent topic in the media. Our advice on drink spiking continues to be recognised as a leading source of information by both the media and other organisations, such as the Metropolitan Police and local authorities. We have identified this as an area where demand for credible information, support and advice will continue to grow and are commissioning new research into drink spiking in 2022.

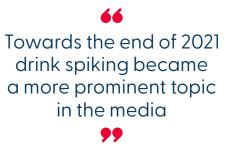
## Using our brand to motivate people

We know that the Drinkaware brand is well-known, and that millions of people trust it to be their source of information about alcohol.

To inform our brand relaunch, we surveyed 2,000 people drinking more than 11 units a day about their perceptions of Drinkaware and our relevance to them. We also commissioned some qualitative research to support the brand development work. This research indicated that those drinking at risky levels may feel that their lives are out of control and suggested that emphasising that people can take control of their lives, with information and support from Drinkaware and others, would be motivating and empowering. In August, we therefore launched our refreshed Drinkaware brand. Our 'Change Starts with You' branding helps to signal that shift and remind audiences that the decision to change comes from within them and that Drinkaware can support them on that journey with advice and information when they are ready.

We made our branded materials clearer and more engaging and developed a style of icons and illustrations, to help us communicate more clearly to a broader spectrum of people.

Reaching and communicating with audiences



## Targeted campaigns for change

At the beginning of the year, we launched our 'No More Excuses' campaign. This targeted midlife men and women with a focus on parents and people on furlough due to Covid-19, to encourage them to have more drink-free days. This was in response to the long-term drinking effects recognised in some sections of the population of working from home. The campaign prompted nearly 79,000 people to complete the Drink Calculator Quiz. They then received a personalised assessment of their drinking and what it means for them.



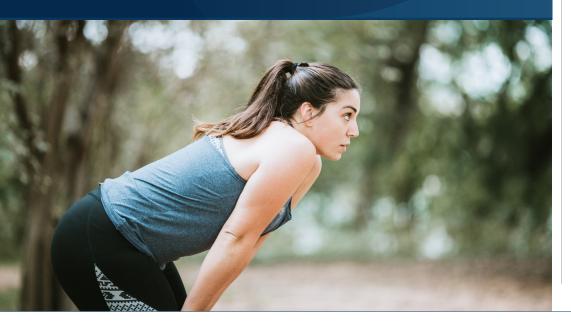
## **Content audiences can trust**

We know that to help motivate people to moderate their drinking, we need content which is informative, evidencebased and engaging. This ranges from advice and information on our website, to videos and infographics, guest and in-house blogs on hot topics, to social media posts. We create content with the support of our independent Medical Advisory Panel, who review and approve our new and revised medical and health-related content, to ensure our advice and information is based on the best available evidence.



# Looking forward

As we came to the end of 2021, we acknowledged how challenging the past two years had been and how Covid-19 and repeated lockdowns had impacted on the lives of people in the UK.



Despite the challenges, however, we can be proud that we are in a strong place as an organisation and feel confident about the future. Our funding is recovering, we have successfully restructured the organisation to make us fit for the future and we are starting to develop our new strategy which will guide our activity over the next few years.

We also have a new Chair of Trustees in place to help lead us and 2022 will see a new permanent Chief Executive Officer in place.

We have had successes in growing and diversifying our income and in 2022 we launched a new Drinkaware shop platform.

## Our campaigns will continue to reach millions of people in the UK.

The platform will help to inform people about our different types of alcoholharm training, products and services and give people access to a wide range of educational resources to help reduce alcohol harm. Our campaigns will continue to reach millions of people in the UK and offer them the digital tools and information they need to help them reduce their drinking.

We have also learned a huge amount about working effectively and flexibly and how to be more agile so that we can adapt to change inside and outside the organisation.

In 2022 and beyond, we will continue our mission to reduce alcohol harm in the UK and will continue to be led by the evidence. We will continue at the forefront of research into drinking behaviour in the UK and explore specific areas of interest such as drink spiking and drinking levels in specific communities.



# About Drinkaware

We offer information, advice and support to millions of people each year, to help them decide which practical changes are right for them. We give tips and tools to help people form new habits and make changes that stick.

We want people to be protected from alcohol harm. We take what we have learned about helping people to cut back and use that evidence to promote a world where it is easier to drink less.

Drinkaware is funded by unrestricted voluntary donations from more than 140 organisations. These include UK alcohol producers, retailers, supermarkets, venues, restaurant groups and sports associations. By joining forces with others and working in partnership with our funders and other stakeholders, we can make an even bigger difference.



We have eight new funders this year:

- Cotswold Distillery Company
- Funkin Cocktails Ltd
- North South Wines
- The Greater Good Fresh Brewing Company
- Benchmark Drinks
- John E Fells Ltd
- Elixir Distillers
- Getir UK Limited

The Drinkaware Trust is a charity, registered with the Charity Commission and the Scottish Charity Regulator, and governed by a Board of independent Trustees, chaired by Lucy Armstrong in accordance with its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Each of the Board's Trustees brings relevant expertise to the operations of Drinkaware and acts with full independence. The Board directs the work of the charity, and delegates authority to a Risk & Audit subcommittee chaired by a Trustee.



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