

Mental Health and Alcohol



Session Plan

Session	Mental Health and Alcohol
Background Information	The relationship between alcohol and mental health is complex. Alcohol is sometimes used to try and help manage symptoms of anxiety and depression, but excessive drinking is likely to make those symptoms worse for people. Managing alcohol consumption and getting the right support are crucial to good mental health.
Aim	To raise awareness of the relationship that can exist between alcohol and mental health
Learning Outcomes	Participants will be able to 1. Discuss some of the commonly held misconceptions surrounding mental health and alcohol 2. Describe the effects alcohol can have on our mental health 3. Describe what signs to look out for when concerned about an individual's mental health when they are using alcohol? 4. List resources that can help support mental health and wellbeing and alcohol
Duration	• 1.5 hours
Resources	• IT • Presentation • Flipchart/pens • Session handouts • Evaluation

Learning outcomes	Participant Activity	Resources	Time
1. Discuss some of the commonly held misconceptions surrounding mental health and alcohol	Quiz	Quiz	10 min
2. Describe the effects alcohol can have on our mental health	Effects of alcohol on mental health	Slide Flipchart Pens	15 min
3. Describe what signs to look out for when concerned about an individual's mental health when they are using alcohol	What to look out for	Slide Flipchart Pens	15 min
4. List resources that can help support mental health and wellbeing and alcohol	What do people need?	Slide Resources handout	15 min
5. Looking after our own mental health	Self-care	Slide	5 min
6. Reflection and session close	Reflection	Evaluation	5 min

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Facilitator notes

Slide	Notes	Time	Resources
1	Welcome participants and introduce yourself before offering an overview of the session. Have the title slide up and visible whilst doing this. Emphasise that the session today is merely an introduction to basic mental health and alcohol. Highlight that we know the relationship between alcohol and mental health is complex and this session is not intended to make people experts but offer a basic awareness and understanding of mental health and the links with alcohol and support available for those struggling with alcohol and mental health issues. Keeping safe Reinforce this is a basic awareness session and does not allow for detailed discussion. If you are concerned about a participant's mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their Doctor should be their first point of contact. If you feel the person's life is in immediate danger please call 999 for assistance. Online delivery Please refer to the Healthy Minds Online Guidance if you are facilitating a session online.	5 min	Slides
2	Put up the session overview slide and read out what will be covered today.		
Activity & 3	Mental Health and Alcohol Quiz Individual or Group Activity Put the slide up, ask the question is there a relationship between alcohol and mental health? Do not take any answers. Let's start with exploring some of the knowledge and attitudes that surround mental health and alcohol. Distribute the quiz to participants. This can be done on an individual basis or as a group. Ask participants to complete the quiz, true or false. This is a good starting point and gives an insight	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Quiz Breakout rooms

	into the participant's knowledge and attitudes on the subject matter. Once completed, go through each of the questions of the quiz to generate discussion. Use the supporting statements to provide the correct answers and information. Discussion point: Were there any surprises? Ask now is there a relationship between alcohol and mental health?		
4 & 5	Statistics The purpose of the statistics section is to help build a picture of the prevalence of mental health and alcohol issues facing Scotland. Inform the participants we are going to a look at some of the statistics relating to both alcohol mental health. Read the information off the slide highlighting alcohol and mental health statistics. Points to highlight when sharing statistics Under reporting: statistics are dependent on self-reporting and individuals tend to under report their alcohol consumption. What do we mean by hazardous and harmful drinking, basic definitions: • Hazardous = High Risk Drinking. A pattern of alcohol consumption that increases someone's risk of harm. • Harmful = A pattern of alcohol consumption that is causing mental or physical damage. More information on this can be found at NICE and CMO Facilitators can share this with participants and/or put the link in Teams chat function if delivering online. Bullet point 3 • A further breakdown of this statistic shows: Hazardous: 15-34 units for women, 15-49 for men weekly and	5 min	Slides

	harmful consumption (35 or more weekly for women, 50 for men). What does a unit equate to? 1 unit is equal to half a 175ml glass of wine, half a pint of standard strength beer or lager and one 25ml measure of spirits. Discussion point: once you have read off the information, ask the participants what their thoughts and views are on the statistics, are they alarmed by them? Again highlight that the statistics provide a snapshot of the scale of the challenge we are encountering in relation to alcohol and mental health and the impact on health, social care, crime, productive capacity and wider costs. Statistics source: Alcohol consumption in Scotland - from Scottish Health Survey 2019 & Scotland's Public Health Priorities 2018.		
Activity & 6	How can alcohol use affect mental health? Group Activity We are moving on to explore how alcohol use can affect mental health. Divide participants into groups, provide flipchart and pens. Invite the groups to think about, discuss and write down how alcohol use can affect our mental health. Once completed, take feedback from each group, one/two examples from each. Bring up the slide to highlight some examples of how alcohol use may affect our mental health, highlighting that the list is by no means exhaustive. Inform participants that we should seek to provide a balanced view of alcohol use across a spectrum.	15min (5 min activity, 10 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart/ Pens

7	Alcohol and Mental Health Cycle The effects alcohol can have on mental health leads on to illustrate the alcohol and mental health cycle. While the effects of alcohol can sometimes have a short term positive impact on our mood, in the long term it can cause problems for mental health. The alcohol and mental health cycle demonstrates the vicious cycle of drinking alcohol to deal with stress, to forget things, but ultimately is linked to a range of mental health issues from depression and memory loss, to suicide. Talk through the cycle starting at the drink to relax reference point: ➤ Many people drink to relax, combat feelings of stress, to cope and/or forget about what is going on in their life. ➤ Alcohol makes them feel better for a short period of time. ➤ The effects of the alcohol begin to wear off. Using alcohol to cope with emotions or regulate mood can cause problems because alcohol is a depressant. A depressant is a chemical substance that makes the body's systems less active. ➤ The person's mental health declines. Drinking a lot dulls the 'feel good' systems in the brain so more alcohol is needed to achieve the same effects. In the long run, drinking can reduce mental wellbeing and contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression, rather than relieving them. Drinking too much can become a harmful coping mechanism. • To bring back the "feel good" mood, the cycle begins again with the individual drinking to relax, cope with stress etc. Highlight that when someone is drinking too much, their relationships, work and finances can suffer. This can further contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression. Heavy drinking can lead to impulsive, irrational behaviour. There are	10 min	Slide
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	strong links between alcohol use, self-harming behaviour, suicidal thoughts and those who die by suicide. Information adapted from Alcohol Focus Scotland.		
Activity & 8	What to look out for? Group Activity So we have looked at the effects alcohol can have on our mental health and the vicious cycle that can follow. Now we are going to explore what signs might we look out for if we can are concerned about someone's mental health and alcohol use, thinking of the cycle we have just discussed, what might alert you? Divide the participants into groups. Ask each group to discuss the above. Once the activity is completed, take feedback from each of the groups. Bring up the slide to share signs to look out for. Highlight this is not an exhaustive list.	15 min (8min activity, 7 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens
Activity & 9	Supports Group Activity This section of the session will explore what supports could be considered for those struggling with their alcohol use and mental health. These could be local, city and national, remind participants that it might not always be a "service" that the individual may want to access. Put participants into groups and invite them to discuss supports. Once completed take feedback from each group, one/two examples from each. Once all groups have fed back, bring the slide up. Sleep hygiene refers to habits and practices that are beneficial to sleeping well on a regular basis. This highlights examples of some suggested supports, not an exhaustive list. Supports have been themed into self-help and services.	15 min (5min activity, 5 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens or Alcohol and mental health resources handout

	Conclude that one size does not fit all and individuals may choose different supports at different times when it comes to addressing their alcohol use and mental health issues. They may also use more than one source of support at a time. This can include self-help through websites, accessing group support, 1 to 1 support, or a specialist service, telephone support lines, talking to a supportive friend, colleague and/or family member. Circulate the alcohol and mental health resources handout, highlight these are general and not an exhaustive list. Information is also included on formal alcohol training courses for participants who may want to explore further learning opportunities. Facilitators can adapt the resources handout to include locality resources and supports. Conclude the discussion by reiterating that the relationship between alcohol and mental health is complex. Alcohol is sometimes used to try and help manage symptoms of anxiety and depression, but excessive drinking is likely to make those symptoms worse for people. Managing alcohol consumption and getting the right support are crucial to good mental health.		
Activity & 10	Remind the participants of the importance of looking after their own mental health and provide a self-care activity.	5 min	Slide
Session Close	Thank the participants for their time and ask them to complete an evaluation.	5 min	Evaluation