

## **APPENDIX - Item 08**

### ***Drink Free Days Derby: Update on status and questions for discussion on future direction***

#### **Introduction**

In January 2020, alcohol education charity Drinkaware presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board on *Drink Free Days Derby (DFDD)*, a fully integrated health programme supported by Derby City Council. DFDD's objective was to reduce key measures of alcohol related harm across the city during a three-year period through a multi-agency, co-ordinated approach to awareness raising, education and intervention. Due to launch in March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the DFDD being paused. This paper outlines current status and invites discussion from the H&WB on future direction.

#### **Background**

In 2019, Drinkaware approached Derby City Council Public Health team to explore an innovative project to test and evaluate the impact Drinkaware and local partners could have on harmful drinking in a specific geographic area. Through close working with the Public Health team and a stakeholder workshop in October 2019, the project evolved into "*Drink Free Days Derby*", a fully integrated health programme focused on reducing alcohol harm across the city.

Planned activity included launch at the Derby 10k in March 2020; a *Drink Free Days Derby* advertising campaign; local PR; working with local employers to deliver alcohol education to employees; working with local on-trade outlets promote the campaign and 0% alcohol products; supermarket activity to encourage customers to assess their own drinking and working with Derby County F.C. Community Trust to incorporate Drinkaware tools and resources into their community initiatives.

Prior to the launch of the activity, Drinkaware conducted baseline research with a pre-intervention questionnaire conducted via phone survey among 1,000 (adult 18+) residents of Derby (DE1, DE3, DE21, DE22, DE23, DE24, DE65, DE72, DE73, DE74 postcodes only) in March 2020. This collected data on current AUDIT-C score/risk level; weekly unit intake; attitude to own drinking; moderation techniques employed and extent of advice on their level of drinking. In addition, Drinkaware collected the following demographic data: age, sex, ethnicity, postcode (first part only) and Index of Multiple Deprivation. This baseline was intended to be used to measure progress against during the following three-year period.

#### **Current status**

Due to the rapidly changing situation in relation to COVID-19 and the inevitable pressures on local health systems, as well as local Government services, community organisations and individuals; Drinkaware paused the programme in March 2020.

Since March 2020, Drinkaware has developed an [advice hub](#) on alcohol and coronavirus and has conducted regular research into lockdown levels of drinking which has shown increased alcohol consumption in certain groups. [Drinkaware Monitor 2020](#) – a YouGov study of 9,046 UK adults conducted in September, found that those categorised as 'higher risk drinkers' – representing nearly eight million UK adults – are most likely to have drunk more than normal (24%) throughout the lockdown period, compared with other categories of drinker. In addition, parents of under 18s and those who have had an impact on their mental health were also drinking more. There is also a striking relationship between other unhealthy behaviours and drinking more during lockdown, those who have eaten less healthily, gained weight, or smoked more, were more likely to have drunk more throughout lockdown. A further study was commissioned in December to understand the impact of

continued restrictions. It is clear that although some groups have indeed drunk less during the pandemic, the issue of alcohol related harm remains pressing and many individuals – often already in higher risk categories – have increased consumption further.

For Drinkaware itself, the pandemic has led to the loss of a third of its income and an inevitable need to refocus and reassess priorities. This included furloughing half the staff team over the summer, downsizing offices, and subsequent restructuring of the organisation, including redundancies.

As a result, Drinkaware faces challenges, certainly for the next 6-12 months, in applying the same level of resource to key projects as had been possible pre-pandemic. However, we are acutely aware of the impact of the pandemic on increased consumption and are concerned that these behaviours may become ingrained leading to further long-term health harms. We are also keen to work with partners in Derby to help address local levels of alcohol related harm.

### **For Discussion: Future direction of the project**

As this is a partnership project, before any decision, Drinkaware is keen to hear the views of the H&WB. Areas of particular interest are the current experiences and priority level of alcohol harm within their respective organisations; the level of focus and resource available to help address this over the next 6-12 months, and thoughts regarding future direction of DFDD.

As a starting point regarding future direction, Drinkaware has below briefly outlined **three potential options to prompt discussion**:

#### **1. Discontinue the project**

Due to the current pressures on key project partners and the remaining priorities of Covid, one option is to suspend the project indefinitely. Although this reflects the current position of project partners and their capacity to undertake DFDD as previously planned, it does raise concerns about addressing recent and longer-term trends regarding alcohol harm in Derby.

#### **2. Progress as planned with partners committing required resource**

To progress as previously planned, with project partners prioritising DFDD and inputting the required level of resource. **Drinkaware is currently unable to deliver resource in line with this option, and it is expected other key partners may be in a similar position.**

#### **3. To extend the temporary suspension of the project for 2021, allowing project partners to focus on current pandemic led priorities and with a view to formally reassess at end of 2021.**

This may be the most prudent option for most project partners and would be in line with Drinkaware's current levels of resource available for 2021. In the interim, Drinkaware can share the baseline research and analysis undertaken in Derby with DCC PH team, and will continue to share all research due to be conducted across 2021 to help inform the future direction.

**Adam Jones, Director of Business Development & Partnerships; Lizzie Worth, Head of Public Affairs, Drinkaware; March 2021**