



**Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI) is the national independent advocate working to reduce harm from alcohol.**

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**Our vision is a society free from alcohol harm.**

**Our mission is to advocate to reduce alcohol harm.**

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**We are committed to the following values:**

Compassion – avoiding any judgements on the individual

Transparency and honesty

Evidenced-based approach.

Commitment to long-term well-being and public health

Integrity

Working in partnership.

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We campaign for the burden of alcohol harm to be lifted from the individual, community and State, and have a strong track record in effective advocacy, campaigning and policy research.

Our work involves providing information on alcohol-related issues, creating awareness of alcohol-related harm and offering public policy solutions with the potential to reduce that harm, with an emphasis on the implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018.

AAI support the work of the HSE Alcohol Programme, informing strategic alcohol initiatives as an instrument of public health planning. We act as the secretariat to the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland, as its co-founding member, and serve on the HSE Alcohol Programme Implementation Group and on the Board of the European Alcohol Policy Alliance, (Eurocare), Brussels.

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## Foreword from the Chair

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**2021 was a landmark year for Alcohol Action Ireland and the campaign to reduce alcohol harm. The government announced that Minimum Unit Pricing would be implemented from January 2022, a decade after first proposed and following sustained campaigning from AAI and other public health advocates. MUP is a lifesaving measure and a critical component of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018. It will substantially reduce alcohol harms. However, it is not a silver bullet, and for the Act to achieve its objective of a 20% reduction in alcohol use in Ireland, all sections of the Act must be implemented as an urgent priority**

The urgency for implementation of the Act has been made clear throughout the pandemic with continuing evidence of alcohol harms and critical resources required to help victims of alcohol. One hospital survey reported that alcohol related liver disease has increased by 30% and in some instances 20% of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity being deployed to care for patients with life-threatening alcohol-related illness and injuries.

Much remains to be done in relation to the implementation of some of the most important measures of the Act, including health warning labelling of alcohol products, the broadcast watershed for alcohol advertisements and content control of such advertising. There is no timeline or indication from Government as to when these controls will be implemented, and AAI continues to advocate strongly for these proven measures to be introduced.



Prof. Frank Murray, Chair of Alcohol Action Ireland.

The impact of increased alcohol consumption in the home during the pandemic on the 200,000 children living with the trauma of parental problem alcohol use, is of particular concern. In 2021, AAI ran its first annual awareness week, highlighting the issue under the banner: 'End the Silence'. This series of events in October 2021 examined multiple concerns for such children and the legacy carried into adulthood.

The current low-risk alcohol consumption guidelines in Ireland are outdated and at variance with the evidence-informed guidelines developed in the UK and other OECD countries. In particular, they fail to recognise adequately the harmful effect of binge drinking in men and reflect outdated, discredited views regarding potential health benefits of alcohol. These guidelines need to be reviewed and updated urgently. Crucially, they need to be promoted widely so that citizens are aware of the risk from alcohol use.

AAI also continued its work advocating for improved services for all affected by alcohol harm. AAI published a significant report – A Snapshot Survey of Alcohol Treatment Services in 2021. A key recommendation from this report is the need for trauma-informed services which should be monitored by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

An important element of the work of AAI is to develop policy solutions for an Irish context. Position papers and submissions to public consultations across many areas of public policy, including the Mid-term review of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy, Reform of alcohol licensing and the development of the new World Health Organisation Global Alcohol Strategy, were completed. AAI has established strong working relations with partners nationally and internationally which helps to inform this work. Such collaboration is essential given the highly contested global space in which we work and underscored the need for a strong 'whole of government' approach.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise the expertise, professionalism and commitment of the AAI Executive and thank them for all they have done and continue to do. The core team was enhanced in 2021 with the addition of an intern for much of the year. They have made a significant impact and continue to keep issues around alcohol harm high on the public consciousness.

I acknowledge and commend our volunteer Board members and especially thank two retiring members, Carol Fawsitt, who stepped down as Chair in 2021 after eight years in the role and 13 years on the Board, and Dr Declan Bedford who had served since the formation of Alcohol Action Ireland in 2003. They have made an immense contribution to reducing alcohol harm in Ireland.

We acknowledge the financial support of our funders in 2021 - HSE, Mental Health Ireland, Irish Research Council and the many generous individuals who have made donations.

Finally I want to thank the many organisations in the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland who continue to support the campaign for the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act. I am also very appreciative of the many individuals who work with us through social media, contacting their elected representatives and often sharing their painful but powerful stories of the impact of alcohol on families and communities.

The alcohol burden in Ireland is not a problem without a solution and together we can drive progress toward our vision of a society free from alcohol harm.

**Prof Frank Murray MD**  
Chair, Alcohol Action Ireland

**2021 was the second year of Alcohol Action Ireland's five-year strategic plan *Leading Change: A Society Free from Alcohol Harm, 2020-2024*. Throughout the year, AAI worked across the five strategic goals laid out in the strategy.**

1

**Coherent and urgent implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act**

2

**A childhood free from alcohol harm**

3

**Services for all affected by alcohol harm**

4

**Establishment of a state sponsored Office to lead on alcohol policy**

5

**Be the authority on alcohol advocacy and policy in Ireland**

These goals are cross-cutting, for example full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act will help to protect children from alcohol harm, while the establishment of a state Alcohol Office has the potential to drive innovative alcohol policy development across all areas of alcohol harm.

Our approach is to research the policy solutions, publish the evidence and bring our proposals to the public and policy makers. We arrange direct meetings with stakeholders, seek parliamentary questions, organise awareness events, generate media coverage and create innovative social media campaigns with tools such as videos, graphics and podcasts. We work closely with national and international partners, who share common public health goals, to advance our vision and contribute to global action.

Using these methods, we have made significant progress across all areas of the plan in 2021 as outlined below.

## Goal 1

# Coherent and urgent implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act

The Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 (PHAA) is a suite of measures designed, when fully implemented, to reduce alcohol use in Ireland by 20% over a period of seven years. The legislation reflects the World Health Organisation's 'best buys' on alcohol policy – ie controls on price, marketing and availability.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on alcohol use in Ireland given the restrictions on hospitality in both 2020, when licensed premises were largely closed for 40 weeks, and continued into 2021. The overall level of consumption in 2021 has reduced by 4.7% compared with 2020. However, there was a significant increase in home drinking which had been fuelled by hyper-discounting of alcohol products in the retail sector. This shift in alcohol use has been linked to increases in alcohol-related illness and domestic violence. Equally there are tentative signs of progress after a decade of resilient advocacy that public awareness of alcohol risk is taking hold and alcohol use is being modified.



Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly speaking at the announcement of Minimum Unit Pricing.

### Minimum Unit Pricing

In May 2021 the Irish government announced that Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for alcohol would begin in January 2022. This price measure was first proposed more than a decade ago and is a central policy of the PHAA. AAI co-ordinated a campaign highlighting the benefits of the measure and in particular pointing to strong evidence from other jurisdictions such as Scotland, provinces in Canada, parts of Australia and countries in eastern Europe who have implemented MUP. This was backed up with a social media campaign which encouraged members of the public to contact their elected representatives about the need for the introduction of MUP. We have been supported in this work by over 60 individuals and organisations who are members of the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland. Our contribution in this area was acknowledged with AAI's CEO participation in the Department of Health's media briefing on the announcement.

The urgent need for MUP was highlighted yet again in AAI's 2021 annual price survey and market research report which provided evidence of the widespread availability of exceptionally low-priced alcohol.





Its introduction has been fiercely resisted by vested interests but has been widely welcomed, nationally and internationally, by the public health community. It is likely to provide impetus for other jurisdictions considering fiscal approaches to reducing alcohol harm. From January 2022 it will cost at least €17 for a man to purchase 17 standard drinks and €11 for a woman to purchase 11 standard drinks – the current HSE low-risk weekly drinking guidelines.

In the period prior to the introduction, AAI ran a sustained public awareness campaign highlighting the benefits of the measure. The campaign included a series of 10 videos featuring contributions from public health figures who provided vital public health messaging as well as multiple media contributions by AAI.

We are continuing to collaborate with our public health colleagues in Northern Ireland to advocate for the introduction of MUP in that jurisdiction. A submission was made to the Northern Ireland Department of Health’s consultation on substance use strategy while AAI’s Head of Advocacy made a presentation on MUP to the Members of the All Party Group on Cancer at Stormont in November 2021.

### Ending of promotions to incentivise alcohol use.

January 2021 saw the operation of Section 23 of the PHAA which provides for the ending of promotions that incentivise alcohol use including the awarding of loyalty card points and promotions that allow for alcohol to be sold at a reduced price or given away for free when bought alongside other products. It goes some way to de-normalising the sale of alcohol products compared with regular groceries.

### Alcohol advertising and sports marketing

This year saw the introduction in November 2021 of the PHAA legislation around restrictions on alcohol marketing. These modest measures include a ban on alcohol sponsorship of events aimed at children and a prohibition on alcohol advertising in or on a sports area during a sporting event. The need for such measures was made particularly apparent with the publication in 2021 of a report on the frequency of viewers’ exposure to alcohol promotion during the 2020 Six Nations Rugby Championship. AAI in partnership with the Institute of Alcohol Studies (London) and Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP, Edinburgh) commissioned the study by the Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling. The research revealed that during the broadcast of Ireland’s home match against Wales, viewers were targeted with 754 alcohol promotion messages – one every 15 seconds.

Around 50% of these references occurred in the field of play so the introduction of the PHAA restrictions should make a significant difference to the saturated alcohol marketing in this area. The study also monitored levels of alcohol marketing in the games which were played in France, a country which has banned alcohol advertising. Despite this there were clear instances of what has been termed ‘alibi marketing’ – i.e. using terminology closely associated with alcohol brands or advertising zero alcohol products which use the same branding as the alcohol version. AAI will be keeping a watching brief on any such moves in Ireland.

### Notice to Executive for grant or renewal of license

There was also progress with the announcement in November 2021 of the commencement of Section 4 of the PHAA with an operational date of November 2022.





This is a significant measure, inasmuch as it provides the Health Service Executive a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the public health impact of granting further alcohol licensing in communities where alcohol availability is ubiquitous, and voice their concern to the granting, or renewal, of such licences. The importance of this Section was raised by AAI in its submission to the Night-time Economy Taskforce (Nov 2021) and is particularly pertinent given the announcement in late 2021 of a proposed Sale of Alcohol Bill which will seek to reform alcohol licensing statute.

### Advertising Controls

Despite the good progress outlined above, important sections of the PHAA legislation controlling alcohol advertising have not been implemented including a broadcast watershed and content of alcohol advertising. The importance of such measures is clear considering that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Statutory Report on the Effect of the BAI Children's Commercial Communications Code (2021) found that seven out of the top ten TV programmes for Irish children aged 4-17 were live daytime sports broadcasts: GAA, Rugby and Soccer. The introduction of the broadcast watershed for alcohol advertisements would have a significant impact on the amount of alcohol promotion to which children in Ireland are exposed.

There is also strong public support for the immediate introduction of these measures. Polling carried out for AAI by Ireland Thinks, and funded by the Tomar Trust, in November 2021 found:

- 70% back stopping alcohol adverts from being shown on TV before 9pm.
- 68% back restrictions to limit what alcohol advertising children see and hear.
- 66% back stopping alcohol adverts from being streamed on social media channels

The international literature and the imperative of public policy is clear – the greater the level of exposure to, or engagement with, alcohol marketing, the more likely young people are to drink alcohol and to develop dependency problems.

### Health Information Labelling

Another major outstanding element of the PHAA is the provision of health information labelling which would include details of the quantity of alcohol contained in the product, its energy value in calories as well as health warnings informing the public of the direct link between alcohol and cancer as well as the danger of drinking in pregnancy. Consumers should have the right to know the inherent risk of use and so, able to make informed decisions about the products they purchase and consume. Yet public awareness of these dangers is low.

Alcohol was responsible for an estimated 1000 diagnoses of cancer in 2020. Occasions such as Breast Cancer Awareness Week afford us an opportunity to highlight the role of alcohol in breast cancer diagnoses and the need for clear product warning. Mouth, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Day (16 Sept) highlighted the role of alcohol in this group of cancers through seminars and supporting social media campaign.

Ireland's legislation in this area of Health Information labelling is ground-breaking and is being closely watched by public health advocates around the world. We were encouraged by the publication in 2021 of the European Commission *Europe Beating Cancer Plan*. Noting that alcohol accounts for over 15% of cancer attributable deaths in men and 30% in women across Europe it makes commitments to mandatory alcohol health warnings to be advanced before the end of 2023.

These measures are being fiercely contested by vested interests. We are working closely with our partners in Europe to counter such opposition in a co-ordinated way and advocate for citizens right to know. Throughout the year we raised this issue repeatedly in the media and in submissions to the EU Commission on labelling of alcohol products.

Like Ireland's public health legislation on second hand smoking, Ireland has the opportunity to lead the way in Europe and across the world in implementing cancer warning labelling on alcohol products.



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## Goal 2

# A childhood free from alcohol harm

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The impact of alcohol on children can have life-long implications. Children in Ireland are currently experiencing harm from alcohol in multiple ways including:

- Exposure to alcohol during pregnancy
- Brought up in families where there is parental problem alcohol use
- Exposure to risk in their community from others who are engaged in high-risk alcohol consumption
- Introduced to alcohol at an early age

Throughout the year, AAI has worked on policy initiatives and advocacy across these areas. We highlighted these issues in a number of public consultation submissions such as to the Sixth State Report of Ireland to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the EU Child Guarantee and the National Model of Parenting Support Services.

AAI is a member of the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) and the Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN) and has worked to ensure consideration of such issues in these groups.

### Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

The use of alcohol in pregnancy in Ireland has led to a corresponding high level of the conditions of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FAS/FASD) among children in Ireland. This aspect of alcohol harm remains hidden yet the children affected are compromised from a neurobiological perspective, resulting in problems carried with them throughout their lives. One example of this outcome is that such children are over-represented in the care and justice systems.

### Silent Voices

AAI's 'Silent Voices' initiative aims to raise awareness and understanding of the specific issues for the estimated 200,000 + children and 400,000 adult children who have grown up with parental problem alcohol use in Ireland and the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) caused to their lives. It is informed by the lived experience and expertise of the members of its Advisory Group and the personal testimonies which are shared anonymously on its online platform, Shared Voices. It has worked closely with national and international partners including Drug and Alcohol Taskforces, ISPCC and in the UK, National Association of Children of Alcoholics, NACOA, to develop policies and raise awareness.

The evidence of an increase in home drinking and domestic abuse throughout the pandemic gave rise to significant concerns for the safety and well-being of children across Ireland which AAI continuously raised in frequent media contributions. AAI was commissioned by the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force to examine this issue. The resulting report, *Hidden Harm and Covid-19: Exploring the impacts and solutions* was launched in May 2021 at an event which included speakers from HSE and Tusla.

Along with the Children's Ombudsman, AAI contributed to an event organised by the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Taskforce in November 2021 which highlighted the need for targeted services to support children growing up with alcohol harm in the home.

AAI was also pleased to contribute to an international panel discussion as part of NACOA's week of activities in February 2021.

### National Awareness Week: End the Silence

In 2021, AAI ran its first Awareness Week under the banner: *'End the Silence'* – a series of events in October to highlight the multiple issues for such children and the legacy carried into adulthood. The opening event was a public talk with leading expert, Stephanie Brown, PhD who spoke on *Living and coping with a legacy of trauma*. This was followed by a panel discussion and contributions from Founders of Silent Voices, Carol Fawsitt, Marion Rackard and Barbara Whelan

There was a screening in the Ark, Dublin of the short film; 'Peel', followed by a discussion with the film maker, Annika Cassidy. A two-part podcast was produced for therapists working in this area which was supported by Addiction Counsellors of Ireland and the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and distributed to their members.





The campaign concluded with a large one-day event, *Where the light enters: Hope and Healing through trauma informed education* with key-note speaker Dr Gabor Maté. This was held in conjunction with the School of Education at Maynooth University and was supported by a grant from the Irish Research Council.

2300 people registered for the events and the resulting resources were accessed over 16,000 times following the campaign.

### Alcohol and domestic violence

Much of the evidence suggests that when alcohol is involved in domestic abuse it is a compounding factor rather than the root cause, with evidence showing that alcohol use increases the occurrence and severity of domestic violence.

AAI continued to draw attention to this issue producing a detailed submission to the consultation on the Third National Strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence which particularly highlighted the impact on the development of children who experience such abuse.

### Operation Encompass

Work continued throughout the year to advocate for the introduction of Operation Encompass which is an initiative deployed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is designed to support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse by facilitating an early information sharing partnership between police and education services to offer immediate intervention and support. The proposal has been considered by the Children First Interdepartmental Group including representation from the Departments of Children, Education and Justice and is awaiting a decision from the Department of Justice to introduce this programme.

We have been very encouraged by support from organisations such as the Children’s Rights Alliance, ISPCC, INTO, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection in relation to the need for Operation Encompass.

### Marketing to children

The early introduction of children to alcohol continued to be highlighted by AAI using the findings from a range of studies such as Growing up in Ireland, My World Survey and the Health Behaviour of School Aged Children 2018. While there have been some modest improvements in recent years, Ireland still has a significant problem with at least 50,000 children starting to drink every year, 40% of 15-year-olds using alcohol and by early adulthood 93% of Ireland’s youth are regular drinkers. A significant factor in this is a brand proposition that captures young people and in particular the use of concepts and techniques that cultivate youth interests such as sports, music and other cultural events.

Throughout 2021 AAI advocated strongly with legislators for curbs on online advertising targeting children to be incorporated in the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill meeting. We worked closely with the Children’s Rights Alliance on this issue. We were pleased to note the recommendation by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in its pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill to ban online advertising to children including at the very minimum, advertisement of junk food, alcohol and gambling.



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## Goal 3

### Services for all affected by alcohol harm

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Alcohol has serious implications on many aspects of our health and across all stages of life. A major goal for AAI is to advocate for appropriate services for all affected by alcohol harm.

#### Mental health and alcohol

Alcohol has a significant impact on mental health and in recognition of this, AAI works closely with Mental Health Ireland. Throughout 2021, both organisations worked together to highlight many aspects around alcohol and mental health with a particular emphasis on

the need for trauma informed services. AAI also made a submission to the consultation on updating the Mental Health Act 2001.

Another key piece of work was the co-production of a module for the workplace on alcohol and mental health which came onstream in 2021.

AAI contributed to the work of the HSE Family Recovery Advisory Group and as a member of Mental Health Reform, AAI also contributed to member discussions around mental health and alcohol particularly in the area of dual diagnoses and trauma informed services.

#### Residential Alcohol Treatment Service Survey

In 2020, AAI began a work programme to explore the issues around alcohol treatment services in Ireland. It is well documented that there is a high level of alcohol consumption in Ireland and a significant level of harmful and dependent drinking. Almost half of all drinkers do so in a hazardous and harmful way and there are an estimated 15% of the population who have an Alcohol Use Disorder. With such statistics it is important to consider the provision of alcohol treatment services particularly in the light of a changing landscape around treatment and an increased understanding of the nature of childhood trauma and its lifelong impact.

The first element of this programme of work was to conduct a snapshot survey of residential and





community treatment services in Ireland. The survey asked questions around numbers treated, demographics, type of treatment, referral pathways, facilities such as detox, linkages with state agencies, follow on care, family support and perceived challenges. The report from the survey was published in May 2021 and made a series of recommendations.

Residential services are just one element of the continuum of alcohol treatment services which ranges from the provision of information and brief interventions, outpatient treatment provision in the community and detoxification services to residential facilities. We intend to continue this work through the coming years examining other aspects of treatment services.

### Korsakoff Syndrome

Korsakoff Syndrome is a chronic memory disorder caused by a severe deficit of thiamine (Vitamin B1). It is most commonly associated with a history of chronic alcohol use and effects around 10,500 people in Ireland.

AAI worked closely with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland and Bloomfield Health Services to develop insight into current service provision/gaps and to make recommendations for meeting the needs of these patients in an Irish context. There were meetings and surveys carried out key stakeholders including families, service providers and clinicians. A discussion document, with a foreword by the Ombudsman, Peter Tyndall, was produced and issued to stakeholders including the HSE for consideration.

### Alcohol Care Teams

Alcohol Care Teams are clinician-led, multidisciplinary teams with integrated alcohol treatment pathways across primary, secondary and community care. With co-ordinated alcohol policies for emergency departments and acute medical units, a 7-day alcohol specific nurse service, addiction and liaison psychiatry services, an alcohol assertive outreach team and consultant hepatologists and gastroenterologists with liver disease expertise they facilitate collaborative, person-centred care. They reduce acute hospital admissions, readmission and mortality, improve the quality and efficiency of alcohol and have multiple evidence-bases, cost-effective and aspirational components.

AAI's CEO is a member of the Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative, under the chairmanship of Dr John Ryan, consultant hepatologist, which is seeking to introduce Alcohol Care Teams into the hospital system in Ireland. The group met regularly bringing together strands of evidence of the impact of alcohol on multiple areas of hospital services.



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## Goal 4

# Establishment of a state sponsored Office to lead on alcohol policy

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There are multiple areas where alcohol has harmful effects across Irish society – e.g. public safety, demand on hospital services, workplace productivity and the highly destructive but most hidden of all, the impact on family life. Addressing alcohol issues requires a co-ordinated ‘whole of government’ approach. The scale of the problem and the challenges presenting, is such that it needs a dedicated focus. This is particularly important given the highly contested environment with the global alcohol industry actively agitating against the development and implementation of public health alcohol policy.

AAI seek to establish a statutory office, which can take a strategic lead on co-ordinating all aspects of alcohol in Ireland viewed through a public health lens including licensing, marketing and controls, strategic development of treatment services, education/prevention programming, commissioning of relevant data, with capacity to monitor and evaluate public alcohol policy.

The importance of such an Office was particularly apparent given the deliberations of the Taskforce on the Night-Time Economy which did not have any representation from the Department of Health. AAI presented to the Taskforce in December 2021 highlighting the need for the public health considerations around the sale of alcohol to be given primacy in its recommendations. Equally, the National Drugs Strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025, is more than half-way through its term and there is a distinct lack of urgency about



the implementation of important areas in relation to alcohol. This was the central theme of our submission to the Mid Term Review of the Strategy (June 2021).

During the year AAI raised the issue of an Alcohol Office at a senior government level and highlighted the need for this in media contributions and submissions such as our 2022 Pre-Budget advice.

### Pre-budget submission

This was prepared, submitted to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform and circulated widely in September. Advice provided included:

- Retention of existing excise duties on alcohol products and the introduction of a Consumer Price Index for these duties in recognition of the erosion by inflation of their value
- Extension of treatment intervention services
- Introduction of a social responsibility levy to adequately fund the cost to society from alcohol harm including resourcing a dedicated policy office on preventing such harm

The concept of ‘polluter pays’ has precedent in other parts of the economy and must be at the heart of any consideration of alcohol policy in Ireland yet decisions on such matters appear to be made without full consideration of the public health burden on alcohol.





## Goal 5

# Be the authority on alcohol advocacy and policy in Ireland

AAI is an independent national advocate for reducing alcohol harm. We seek to reinforce our position not only as the source of trusted information, analysis, data, opinion and research but also as a leader in communication – dissemination, innovation and distribution.

An essential element of Alcohol Action Ireland’s work is to research the issues around alcohol, develop the policies to address the harms caused by alcohol to individuals, families and society and advocate for their implementation.

Throughout the year, AAI developed a series of themes and policy positions on alcohol harm and also contributed to a range of events and public consultations as indicated below as well as multiple conferences, webinars and meetings with policy makers.

We also acted to highlight areas of attempted alcohol industry influence on public health matters for example in the provision of alcohol education programmes in schools and raising this issue with health care organisations and research bodies.

AAI worked with a range of organisations to advance these issues. We are pleased to have such collaborative opportunities to bring our expertise to a range of issues and welcome the support of others for our objectives.

### Public consultation submissions, policy statements and reports

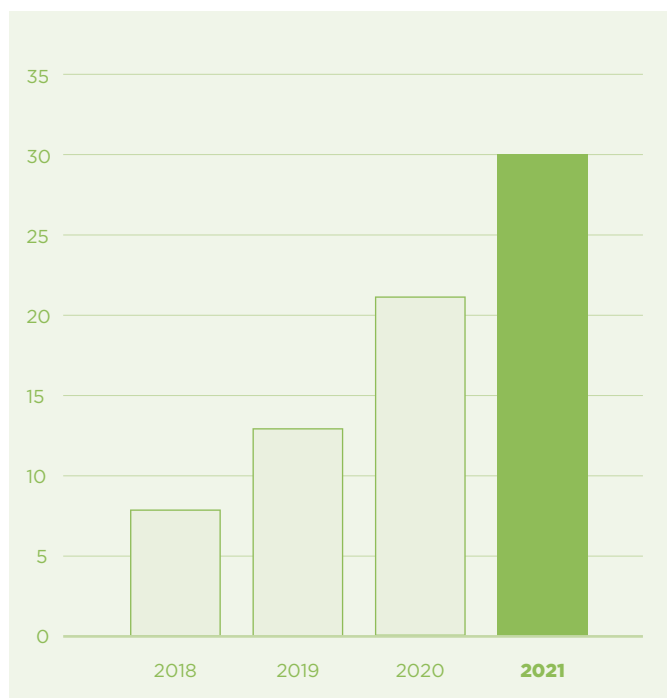
Alcohol issues arise in a multitude of environments including the home, education, health care, online media social affairs, justice system and the economy.

AAI has made submissions and policy statements throughout the year on these issues, drawing on expertise from within the organisation and from our multiple partners, nationally and internationally.

- Alcohol Action Ireland audited accounts for 2020
- Alcohol Action Ireland Annual Review 2020
- Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland Statement On MUP: Our Choice Is to Save Lives
- Alcohol Treatment Services: A snapshot survey. 2021
- Alcohol Action Ireland’s submission to the Department of Justice consultation on the third national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence
- Alcohol Action Ireland’s response to the Health Information and Quality Authority’s public consultation on Draft National Standards for Children’s Services
- Alcohol Education in Our Schools Cannot Be Out-sourced To An Alcohol Industry Funded Organisation
- Are Women Getting the Health Risk Message Around Alcohol Use?
- Christmas cheer: What the Holiday Season Is Really Like for Some
- End The Silence Events Raise Awareness of The Estimated 600,000 People affected By Parental Problem Alcohol Use



## Reports, Statements and Submissions



- 📄 EU 'Beating Cancer' Plan Paves Way for Ireland's Labelling of Alcohol
- 📄 European Child Guarantee, submission
- 📄 Hidden Harm and Covid-19: Exploring the Impacts and Solutions
- 📄 Irish National Drug & Alcohol Survey
- 📄 Is Peer Connectedness Encouraging Earlier Initiation of Alcohol Use Among Irish Children?
- 📄 Online Safety & Media Regulation Bill
- 📄 Public consultation on the development of a national model of parenting support services by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- 📄 Public Support for Action on Alcohol Advertising
- 📄 Pre-Budget Submission

- 📄 Price Survey, 2021
- 📄 Response to well-being Framework - A Government of Ireland Initiative, Carried Out By NESCC
- 📄 Scale Of Alcohol Promotion Throughout Six Nations Rugby Championship
- 📄 Submission To the EU Commission on Labelling Rules on Alcoholic Beverage
- 📄 Submission to the EU Commission on marketing of wine
- 📄 Submission to the Health and Safety Authority
- 📄 Submission To NI Consultation - Tackle Harm from Substance Use
- 📄 Submission to the public consultation on draft legislation to update the Mental Health Act, 2001
- 📄 Supporting Children and Families in Ireland
- 📄 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, submission
- 📄 Submission to Nighttime Economy Taskforce Consultation

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## International networks and events

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### Alcohol Health Alliance UK

AAI is a member of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK. This is an alliance of more than 40 non-governmental organisations who work together to promote evidence-based policies to reduce the damage caused by alcohol misuse. AAI contributed to discussions between members and to their regular news bulletins on alcohol policy.

### Alcohol Policy Futures

AAI's CEO participated in a series of meetings organised by the Institute of Alcohol Studies, Movendi and FARE which are focussed on influencing the World Health Organisation (WHO) processes by co-ordinating input from civil society to the WHO. This is an international grouping termed, Alcohol Policy Futures.

AAI have contributed to communications from this group to the WHO. This is part of a wider mobilisation of civil society towards the World Health Assembly in May 2022 which will consider adopting a new global alcohol strategy.

### Alcohol Research Network (ACORN)

AAI is a member of this network of researchers in UK and Ireland and staff have contributed to a number of seminars organised by the network.

### DEEP SEAS and FAR SEAS Thematic Capacity Workshops

DEEP SEAS (Developing and Extending Evidence and Practice from the Standard European Alcohol Survey) is a tendered service contract awarded by the European Commission to a coordinated group of institutions lead by the CLÍNIC Foundation for Biomedical Research (FCRB, Barcelona).

AAI executive attended multiple workshops around this area including,

- Alcohol taxation and pricing policies
- Cross-border alcohol purchasing, marketing and trade
- Alcohol Agricultural Policy to Protect Health

### European Alcohol Policy Alliance - Eurocare

AAI is a member of Eurocare which is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations across Europe advocating for the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm.

AAI's CEO is a Board Member of the organisation and participated in all Board meetings throughout 2021 as well as taking part in the Eurocare General Assembly in June. A key element of the work plan of Eurocare is around advocating for health information labelling of alcohol products and AAI has worked closely with its European partners to advocate in this area.

AAI also contributed to the European Alcohol Awareness Week, 15-19 November which is co-ordinated by Eurocare, giving a school's presentation on alcohol issues and contributing to a panel discussion on alcohol marketing organised by ACORN.

### European Covid-19 survey

AAI was a partner organisation for a Europe-wide survey on alcohol use during Covid19. The principal investigator of the survey is Dr Jürgen Rehm and it is co-ordinated through the Institute of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at Technische Universität Dresden. The survey was widely disseminated through partner organisations in 2020. In 2021 six publications arose from this study. The main finding was that Ireland and UK were the only two countries in Europe not to see a decrease in self-reported alcohol consumption during the first wave of the pandemic.

### European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

AAI is a member of EPHA and throughout the year participated in meetings. AAI sit on its Health Marketing Policy group.

AAI also responded to the EPHA consultation on the World Health Organisation, European Region's proposed Work Programme 2020-2025.

### Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Australia

There was ongoing contact between FARE and AAI throughout 2021 particularly around the campaigns in both countries on labelling of alcohol products with health warnings.

## **Glasgow Caledonian University**

AAI's CEO was a member of the stakeholder group of a study led by researchers from Glasgow Caledonian University on the impact of Minimum Unit Pricing of alcohol on homeless/street drinkers.

## **Kettil Bruun Society Meeting June 2021**

AAI's intern student, Kristina Kit, presented a paper at this meeting which examined childhood initiation with alcohol and the role of 'peer connectedness' using data from ESPAD (2019), HBSC (2018), Growing up in Ireland (2019) and My World Survey 2 (2019).

## **Virtual Expert Network Group on Alcohol Marketing**

AAI's Head of Communications and Advocacy is a member of this group, organised by the Scottish body Alcohol Focus, to help provide evidence and recommendations for the Scottish Government.

## **World Health Organization (WHO)**

Throughout the year AAI worked closely with the World Health Organization providing information on alcohol issues in Ireland. A key piece of work related to the development of the new WHO global alcohol strategy. AAI has contributed to the consultation around the WHO consultation on the development of its new global alcohol policy. A regional technical meeting was held with European Member States on 25-26 March about the draft policy. AAI's Head of Advocacy and Communications prepared material on this for the Department of Health to encourage the Minister for Health to attend.

### *AAI staff also contributed to:*

- Third WHO Forum on Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviours, June 2021
- Launch of WHO Europe report on SAFER measures around alcohol harm reduction measures,
- Alcohol and cancer - what everyone needs to know: a webinar organised by European Cancer Leagues, European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare) with the support of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe in May, 2021
- Protecting alcohol control policies from vested interests webinar, WHO Health Promotion Department. September 2021

# **National networks and stakeholders**

## **Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland**

The Alliance was established in 2015 by Alcohol Action Ireland and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) and brought together over 50 NGOs, charities and public health advocates. Chaired by Prof Frank Murray, a liver specialist at Beaumont Hospital, Chair of Board of AAI and former RCPI President, it provided a strong voice throughout the campaign to enact the PHAA and now, under the guidance of AAI, works to ensure its implementation.

## **Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative**

AAI is a member of the Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative which was set up to audit the burden of alcohol on the Hospital and to secure support for the development of an Alcohol Care Team (ACT). AAI attended meetings throughout the year and provided input to the initiative's strategic goals.

## **Children's Rights Alliance**

AAI is a member of the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA). Throughout the year AAI worked with the CRA to raise issues around alcohol and children, particularly in the context of children living in homes impacted by alcohol harm and the significant increase in home drinking during the pandemic. AAI also worked closely with CRA around the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill.

## **Galway City Alcohol Forum**

AAI have been working with the Forum in Q4, 2021, to support a greater community engagement through initiative development and strategic communications advice.

## **HSE Alcohol Programme**

AAI's received welcome funding from the HSE Alcohol & Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme and from the National Social Inclusion Office.

AAI has provided expert policy and communications advice to the HSE Alcohol Programme and 'Ask About

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Alcohol' website on a range of alcohol and mental health issues. Throughout the year we have contributed to, and reviewed, multiple reports, research and media campaigns sharing our expert knowledge, skills and an international network of policy advice with the Programme.

### **HSE Mental Health Engagement and Recovery**

AAI has contributed to the HSE Mental Health Engagement and Recovery initiative as members of its Family Recovery Advisory Group and NGO Advisory Group

This initiative is aimed at developing more recovery-orientated mental health services.

### **Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH): North South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group**

AAI is a constituted member of this All-Island forum and its team members attended its meetings in May and November 2021.

AAI's Head of Advocacy was an invited panellist at an Institute of Public Health webinar on corporate influence in June 2021.

### **Irish Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Committee**

AAI sits on this Advisory Committee of the Society which provides advice and oversight on services, policy and research for improving cancer prevention and early detection in Ireland.

### **Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

Throughout the year, AAI has provided expert alcohol policy advice and support to a number of the Local and Regional Task Forces throughout Ireland.

### **Maynooth University**

AAI partnered with the School of Education at Maynooth University in a successful application to the Irish Research Council for a project on trauma informed education. This culminated with a major event for educators in October 2021.

### **Men's Health Forum Planning Group – Men's Health Week 2021**

AAI sits on the Men's Health Forum planning group that organises this annual All-Island awareness event. Men's Health Week ran from 14-18 June. One day of the week was dedicated to alcohol issues and AAI led a social media campaign exploring the impact of alcohol on men's health and well-being.

### **Mental Health Ireland**

AAI formed a partnership with Mental Health Ireland to support the appointment of our policy research officer in 2019. Throughout 2021, both organisations have collaborated on a number of projects.

### **Mental Health Reform**

AAI is a member of Mental Health Reform, a coalition of organisations working to drive reform of mental health services. AAI has contributed to activities and statements particularly around the need for trauma informed services and action on the issue of dual diagnosis to ensure that those who have both a mental health concern and an alcohol problem receive appropriate care.

### **Mouth, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Ireland**

AAI worked with this group and highlighted the issue at a HSE event on Alcohol and Cancer on 15 Sept 2021.

### **NUI Galway, MA/PGDip in Health Promotion; practice module, Nov 2021**

AAI's Head of Communications and Advocacy contributed an afternoon session to this course on advocacy.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention Network**

AAI joined this network of organisations which carry out research and advocate for policy solutions around early childhood interventions. This is in support of the Silent Voices initiative and the AAI goal of a childhood free from alcohol harm. AAI's Policy and Research Officer was appointed to the executive committee and acts as chair of their communications sub-committee. She also presented to the PEIN executive committee on the impact of Covid and alcohol on families and children and on the need for trauma-informed frontline services in Ireland.

### **Public Health Alcohol Research Group**

AAI's CEO is a member of this group which considers issues around research and data on alcohol as it relates to the Public Health Alcohol Act.

### **University College Cork**

AAI partnered with the School of Public Health at University College Cork in a successful application to the Irish Research Council for a project examining the epidemiology of alcohol-related illness in Ireland using data from the Global Burden of Disease Study. A poster paper was presented by AAI intern student, Kristina Kit, at the RCPI Faculty of Public Health Medicine Summer Scientific Meeting 2021, examining alcohol burden across Scandinavian countries and linkages to variation in alcohol policies. A number of other publications and events are planned from this research.

### **University College Dublin**

AAI partnered with the College of Social Sciences with a student having a 12-week placement at AAI. AAI was able to employ the student for a further five months.

## Communications

An essential element of AAI’s work is to bring our messages to a wide variety of audiences from the general public to policy makers and to our stakeholders. During 2021 we developed our new communications strategy which includes an emphasis on the production of podcasts, short videos and graphics for use on social media alongside our detailed reports on alcohol issues and press releases on multiple alcohol issues.

We are also keen to encourage the voice of citizen activism. Alcohol harm stretches into every city, town and village across Ireland with families, workplaces and communities significantly impacted by the outcomes



of alcohol use. In 2021 we recast our communication platforms to amplify those voices and help to bring the constructive messages of public health measures. We also developed our website to include an easy-to-use function to allow emails to be sent to members of the Oireachtas on alcohol issues.

In 2020, AAI launched its first podcast series ‘The Alcohol File’, 30-minute episodes which gives the listener a comprehensive, independent analysis, both national and international, of the many complex issues related to alcohol use. In 2021 the series was extended to include episodes on:

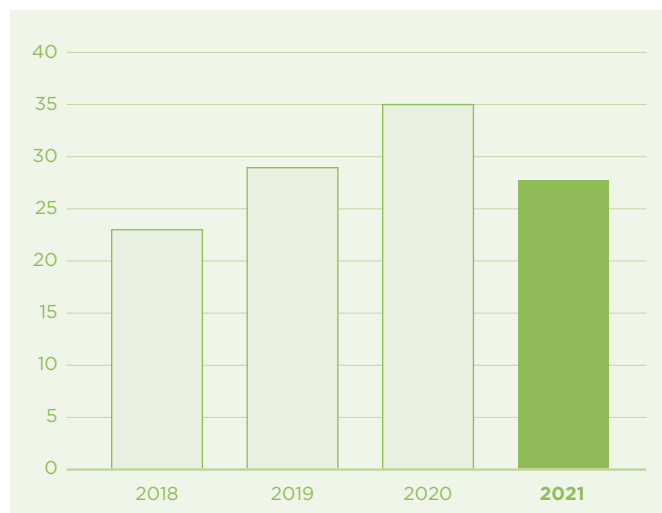
- Progressive alcohol policy – gaining ground but how to win the war?
- Why does Ireland continue to have a high level of alcohol use?
- Alcohol treatment services facing real challenges post covid experience
- Do you know the real risk to your health from alcohol related cancers?
- An insight into the trauma and complex impact of living with parental problem alcohol use, Part 1 and 2
- Can minimum unit pricing make a real difference to reducing alcohol harm?

In 2021 the podcasts were accessed 2145 times.

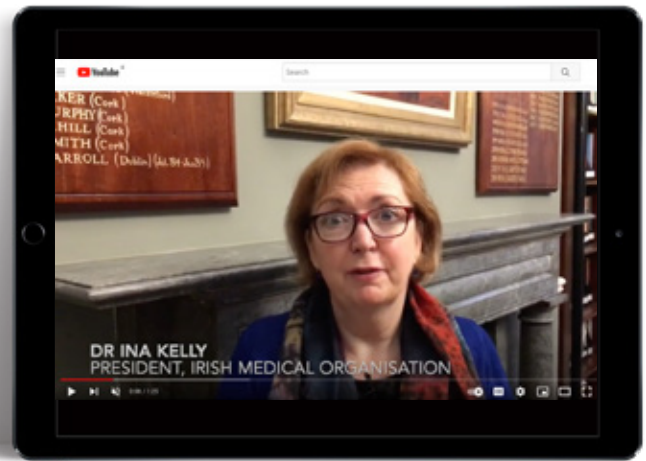
### Media Releases

Throughout the year AAI has issued media releases on a variety of topics from the necessity for minimum unit pricing, health warning labelling of alcohol products and a ban on sports sponsorship to the trauma of children growing up in homes impacted by alcohol harm and the need for trauma informed systems across public services.

### Media Releases







Dr Ray Walley and Dr Ina Kelly made video contributions to the AAI public awareness campaign on the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing.

### Traditional Media Presence

AAI has a strong media presence. As well as issuing press releases we are regularly approached to provide information and comment on alcohol issues.

*In 2021 we had:*

#### Broadcast

**303**

contributions to local and national radio and television programmes;

#### Press

**96**

contributions, quotes and/or commentary to both local and national press titles.

#### Online

**242**

contributions

The earned media value of all press and online features was

**€1.5 million**

and estimated audience reach of

**43 million**

### AAI Newsletter

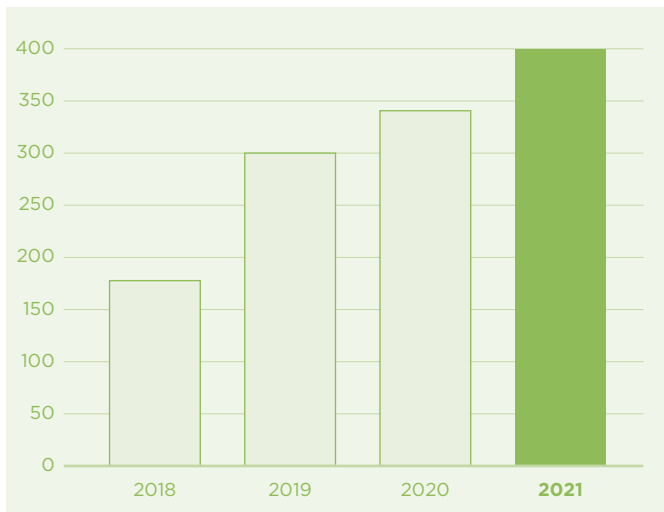
Regular newsletters were introduced in 2020 and were sent to stakeholders in 2021. Requests for updates from AAI increased by 78% in 2021 following the introduction of an easy-to-use sign-up facility on the website.

### AAI website data

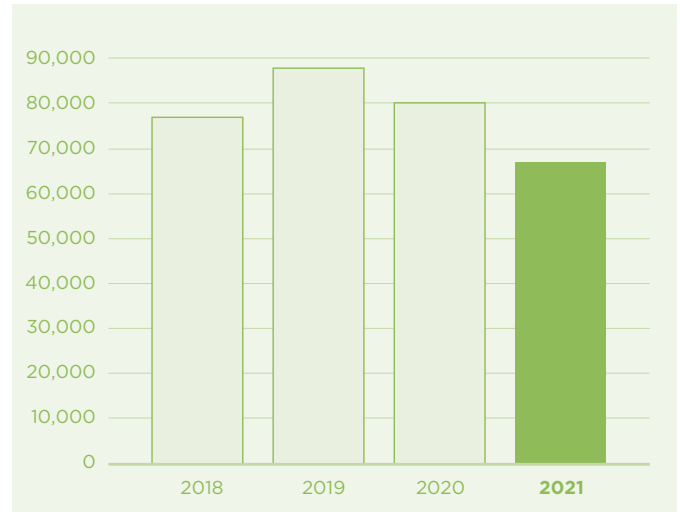
The Alcohol Action Ireland website continues to be a trusted source of independent analysis and information for a variety of stakeholders both from a media and public policy research perspective. Throughout the year the site was updated frequently and blog posts on topical areas developed.

In 2021, the site had over 66,754 users, who in turn had 144,322 pageviews, with 'How much do we drink' proving the most popular page.

### Traditional Media Items - broadcast and press



### AAI Website Visits 2018-2021



## Social Media Profile

Social media is an important element in our communications, particularly for political advocacy.

### Total Twitter activity overview

**985,734**

impressions

**5091**

Total followers

**29,395**

engagements

**542**

Follower gain in 2021

**3,594**

link clicks

**1,161**

Tweets issued

Our 'Silent Voices' initiative has a separate twitter handle

Its Total Fan/Followers is

**721**

And it issued

**248**

tweets in 2021.

AAI also maintain Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok social media channels.

## Governance

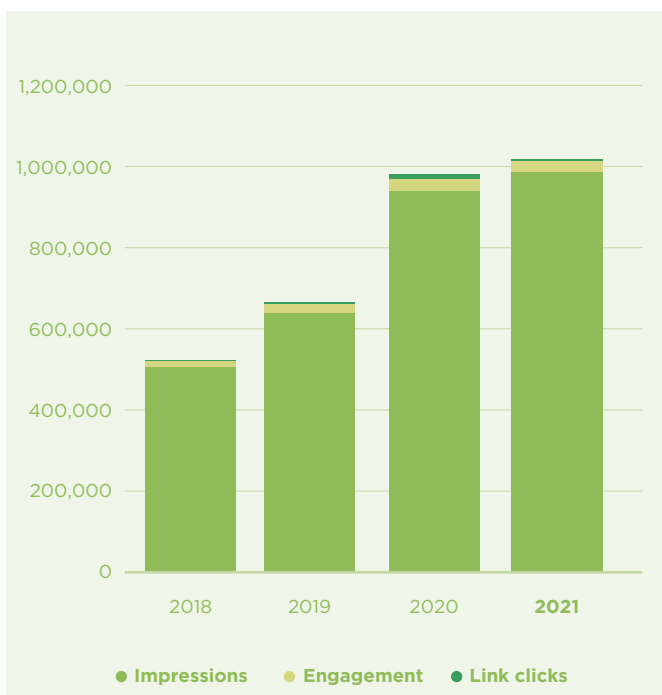
### Charities Governance Code

The Board of AAI draws expertise from across the fields of health, education, youth, finance and legal. It met regularly throughout 2021 providing oversight and specialist input to the work of AAI.

The Constitution of AAI was updated in 2021 which was accepted by the Charities Regulator and the Companies Registration Office.

AAI is fully compliant with the new Charities Governance Code.

### Social Media - Twitter Profile



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## The way ahead

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**2021 was the second year of implementing our five-year plan and much has been achieved across its five goals. In 2022 we will continue to work through the schedule building on the progress of 2021.**

We will maintain a strong focus on the imperative for the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol Act), 2018. We will seek political support for these and other issues round alcohol harm.

With our Silent Voices initiative, we aim to have a second End the Silence Week, working with a range of partners to highlight the issues for both children and adult children. We will have a particular focus on trauma-informed education, highlighting the need for programmes such as Operation Encompass and the development of training for professionals working with those impacted by alcohol harm in the home.

We will work on issues around access to alcohol services and continue to develop policy positions across areas such as FASD and sports sponsorship.

There are significant areas of proposed legislation which may impact on alcohol control, in particular a proposed Sale of Alcohol Bill to reform alcohol licensing and the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill. AAI will advocate strongly for public health consideration in relation to any proposed measures. We will continue to advocate for a revision of the current low-risk drinking guidelines. Such work will also inform and highlight the need for a statutory Alcohol Office.

We will develop our relationships with our national and international partners. We will particularly work with our European partners on issues around the labelling of alcohol products with health information.

We will seek to enhance our research linkages with third level institutes to help inform our evidence base with planned projects around compliance with the provisions of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act.

We will develop a series of quarterly webinars which will explore these issues and continue with our podcast series bringing national and international expertise to alcohol policy development in Ireland.

Our work is specialised and needs financial support. We are very appreciative of the funding received from the HSE, Mental Health Ireland, Irish Research Council and individual donors. In 2021, we will work with our funders to secure support. We also aim to seek funding for research work as well as increasing the level of donations through philanthropy.

We look forward to a year bringing our vision of a society free from alcohol harm a step closer.

## Statement of Financial Activities at 31 December 2021

|                                    | Unrestricted<br>2021<br>€ | Restricted<br>2021<br>€ | TOTAL<br>2021<br>€ | Unrestricted<br>2020<br>€ | Restricted<br>2020<br>€ | TOTAL<br>2020<br>€ |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Income from Charitable Activities  | <b>288,951</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>288,951</b>     | 280,141                   | 0                       | 280,141            |
| GRANTS                             |                           |                         |                    |                           |                         |                    |
| Donations & Legacies               |                           |                         |                    |                           |                         |                    |
| DONATIONS                          | <b>4,863</b>              | <b>55</b>               | <b>4,918</b>       | 2,832                     | 0                       | 2,832              |
| Other Income                       | <b>1,397</b>              | <b>0</b>                | <b>1,397</b>       | 99                        | 0                       | 99                 |
| Total Income                       | <b>295,211</b>            | <b>55</b>               | <b>295,266</b>     | 283,072                   | 0                       | 283,072            |
| Expenditure                        |                           |                         |                    |                           |                         |                    |
| On charitable activities           | <b>(286,194)</b>          | <b>(3,201)</b>          | <b>(289,394)</b>   | (268,034)                 | (1,884)                 | (269,918)          |
| NET (Expenditure)/Income           | <b>9,017</b>              | <b>(3,146)</b>          | <b>5,872</b>       | 15,039                    | (1,884)                 | 13,155             |
| Fund balances at beginning of year | <b>145,935</b>            | <b>18,970</b>           | <b>164,905</b>     | 136,281                   | 15,470                  | 151,751            |
| Transfer of Funds                  | <b>0</b>                  | <b>0</b>                | <b>0</b>           | (5,384)                   | 5,384                   | 0                  |
| Fund balances at end of year       | <b>154,953</b>            | <b>15,824</b>           | <b>170,777</b>     | 145,935                   | 18,970                  | 164,905            |

The 2021 figures are unaudited. The full audited 2021 accounts will be available at a later date on the AAI website.

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## Other information

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Company limited by guarantee  
and not having a share capital.

Company No: 378738. CHY: 15342.  
Registered Charity Number: 20052713.

### Alcohol Action Ireland

Registered Office:  
Coleraine House  
Coleraine Street  
Dublin 7, D07 E8XF

T: +353 1 878 0610.  
E: [admin@alcoholactionireland.ie](mailto:admin@alcoholactionireland.ie)  
U: [alcoholireland.ie](http://alcoholireland.ie)

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### Alcohol Action Ireland Team in 2021

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Dr Sheila Gilheany | CEO                                    |
| Eunan McKinney     | Head of Communications<br>and Advocacy |
| Jennifer Hough     | Policy and Research Officer            |
| Kristina Kit       | Intern student                         |

### Board members of Alcohol Action Ireland

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Carol Fawsitt (Chair)                | Solicitor, Resigned in<br>September 2021 and<br>succeeded by   |
| Prof Frank Murray<br>(Current Chair) | Consultant in Hepatology<br>& Gastroenterology, M.B.,<br>B.Ch. B.A.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.I.,<br>F.R.C.P. (Ed)                      |
| Prof Joe Barry                       | MSc, MD, FRCPI, FFPHM,<br>Public Health Specialist   |
| Dr Declan Bedford,                   | Specialist in Public Health<br>Medicine and former<br>Acting Director of Public<br>Health, HSE (Resigned in<br>September 2021) |
| Catherine Brogan                     | Deputy CEO, Mental<br>Health Ireland   |
| Pat Cahill                           | (Company Secretary),<br>former President<br>Association of Secondary<br>Teachers in Ireland                                    |
| James Doorley                        | Deputy Director, National<br>Youth Council of Ireland  |
| Michael Foy                          | Head of Finance,<br>Commission for<br>Communications Regulation  |
| Dr Colin O'Driscoll                  | Clinical Lead, HSE Mid-<br>West Addiction Services   |
| Dr Mary O'Mahony                     | Specialist in Public Health<br>Medicine and Medical<br>Officer of Health, HSE South  |
| Dr Bobby Smyth                       | Consultant Child &<br>Adolescent Psychiatrist  |
| Tadhg Young                          | Financial Services Executive   |

### Silent Voices Advisory Group Members

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Carol Fawsitt     | Founding Voice   |
| Marion Rackard    | Founding Voice   |
| Barbara Whelan    | Founding Voice   |
| Dr Sharon Lambert | Academic Adviser |
| Austin Prior      | Clinical Adviser |



Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7, D07 E8XF.  
[www.alcoholireland.ie](http://www.alcoholireland.ie)  
[@AlcoholIreland](https://www.instagram.com/AlcoholIreland)

**AlcoholAction**   
Ireland