



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

Our vision is a society free from alcohol harm.

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 mission is to advocate to reduce alcohol harm.

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.

We are committed to the following values:

Compassion – avoiding any judgements on the individual

Evidenced-based approach.

Integrity

Transparency and honesty

Commitment to long-term well-being and public health

Working in partnership.

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.



Foreword from the Chair

Ireland is widely recognised and praised internationally for legislating to reduce alcohol harms in the Public Health (Alcohol) Act (2018) (PHAA), introducing 31 moderate and evidence-based measures. Many of these measures have been implemented.

2023 was a significant year for alcohol policy in Ireland with the commencement of the PHAA regulations providing for comprehensive health information labelling of alcohol products, including a cancer warning and for the broadcast watershed for alcohol advertising. Determined advocacy from Alcohol Action Ireland facilitated the introduction of these measures. The role of AAI in this area has been widely acknowledged, both in Ireland and internationally, as evidenced by the number of invitations to contribute to international policy conferences.

Full implementation Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 remains a key objective of AAI given its potential to substantially reduce alcohol harms.

Alcohol marketing is a key driver of alcohol use, and much remains to be done in this area. The content control of such advertising is a key feature of the Alcohol Act. However, there is no timeline or indication from Government as to when these controls will be implemented. In addition, there is an urgent need for substantial controls to be introduced in relation to online marketing of alcohol, which is not covered by the Act. This gap must now be addressed through codes being developed by Coimisiún na Meán, the newly established, online media regulator. We continue to advocate strongly for these proven measures to be introduced urgently.

The overall intent of the Public Health Alcohol Act is being hugely undermined by plans to liberalise alcohol licensing regulations in the Sale of Alcohol Bill. Proposed measures in this bill would allow for greater availability of alcohol through longer licensing hours and relaxation of a number of licensing measures. The international evidence is clear -these measures will lead to greater alcohol use and an increase in alcohol harms. For example, a one-hour extension of trading hours has been shown to be associated with a 16% increase in alcohol-related crime, a 34% increase in alcohol-related injuries, and up to a 40% increase in road collisions in rural areas.

Approximately 200,000 children in Ireland are currently experiencing parental problem alcohol use, and almost one million adults in Ireland live with the legacy of this trauma. In 2023, AAI developed its third Silent Voices awareness week, highlighting the issue under the banner: 'End the Silence'. This series of events in October 2023 examined multiple concerns with a particular focus on mental health. The initiative was also very active in working with professional bodies to ensure training is provided. AAI continued to advocate for the introduction of early intervention measures, such as Operation Encompass to provide immediate support for children impacted by domestic violence, which is often fuelled by alcohol consumption.

In 2023 AAI launched Voices of Recovery, an initiative to harness the lived experience of people in recovery from alcohol, with a view to making their voices heard to influence policy change.

Such policy development is vital for several reasons.

Firstly, there is a lack of coherence across government regarding alcohol policy. Some departments seek to increase alcohol consumption, and others provide financial support for the production of alcohol. This is completely out of step with both the aims of the Department of Health to reduce alcohol use by 20% and the principles of the PHAA.

Secondly, 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 the effects of alcohol in causing seven cancers. Current Irish guidelines also reflect outdated, discredited views regarding potential health benefits of alcohol. These guidelines need to be updated urgently.

For these and many other reasons, AAI is advocating strongly for the development of an Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction, which would gather and analyse data, and coordinate and drive policy development across government, with the focused aim to reduce alcohol harms in Ireland.

A core function of AAI is to develop potential policy solutions for an Irish context. In 2023, AAI developed 31 position papers and submissions to public consultations across many areas of public alcohol policy, including taxation, online safety, domestic violence and the EU4Health Work Programme. In July 2023, AAI published a major report on alcohol affordability, which was commissioned from the University of Sheffield. This report highlighted that the price of alcohol in retail shops is unchanged over two decades. With no increase in alcohol excise duties since 2013, the value of these has dropped by over 15% due to inflation.

AAI has established strong working relations with partners nationally and internationally, which helps to inform this work. Such collaboration is essential and underscores the need for a strong 'whole of government' approach.

I wish to take this opportunity to recognise the expertise, professionalism and commitment of the AAI Executive, Dr Sheila Gilheany (CEO), Jennifer Hough and Conor Keane. I wish to thank them for all they have done and continue to do. They have made a significant impact and continue to maintain alcohol harm high on the public consciousness.

I acknowledge and commend our volunteer Board members. I especially thank two retiring members, Marie-Claire McAleer and Tadhg Young. They have made an immense contribution to reducing alcohol harm in Ireland. I also want to thank Carol Fawsitt, co-founder of our Silent Voices initiative, who retired from its advisory group having served on this for over five years as well as having previously given tremendous service on the Board and as Chair of AAI.

We acknowledge the financial support of our funders in 2023- HSE, Hospital Saturday Fund and the many generous individuals who have made donations.

Finally, we 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 devastation caused by alcohol on individuals, families and the wider community.

Harm from alcohol consumption is as old as history. AAI plays an important role in reducing alcohol harms in Ireland and will continue to work together with other like-minded groups to build on the progress seen in recent years.

Prof Frank Murray MD FRCPI
Chair, Alcohol Action Ireland

2023 was the fourth 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 2023 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 – i.e. controls on price, marketing and availability. Most of the measures have required considerable advocacy to ensure their commencements and implementation.

2023 was a highly significant year with the commencement of Section 12 re labelling of alcohol products in May, to become operational from May 2026 and Section 19 re the broadcast watershed for alcohol advertisements, commenced in November, to become operational from January 2025. Both of these developments followed a sustained campaign by AAI over a number of years.

Labelling:

This legislation will ensure that no alcohol product can be sold without bearing a warning that informs the public that:

- i. “Drinking alcohol causes liver disease”
- ii. displays a health symbol intended to inform the public of the danger of alcohol consumption when pregnant, and
- iii. “There is a direct link between alcohol and fatal cancers”

In addition, the regulations make it mandatory that the alcohol and calorie content within the product is stated, and that the public health alcohol information website ‘askaboutalcohol.ie’ is displayed.

The legislation was passed in 2018 but required secondary legislation to give effect to the exact specification of the labels. These regulations then had to be notified to the EU Commission. This was done in June 2022 and was followed by a six-month standstill period to allow for comment from stakeholders.

The European Commission considered its position until 22 December 2022. No comment was issued by the Commission. This is entirely consistent with the EU’s 2011 regulation on the provision of food information to consumers which provides that Member States can also adopt national labelling measures provided they notify the European Commission and other member states in advance. This is a recognition of a Member State’s competency to adopt measures requiring mandatory particulars to on-product alcohol labelling on grounds of the protection of public health. This position was made abundantly clear by Stella Kyriakides European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety in a response on 14 March 2023 to a Parliamentary Question on the regulations in which she noted:

In the context of the analysis under the FIC Regulation, the Commission considered that the Irish authorities demonstrated that the notified measures were justified on public health grounds considering the situation in Ireland and that any resulting restrictions for the internal market that the measures may have were proportionate to the objective pursued... Having analysed exclusively the draft measures notified in 2022, the Commission decided not to issue a reaction under the Single Market Transparency Directive.

In early 2023 the government then notified the World Trade Organisation (WTO) about the labelling regulations and after the required stand-still period, commenced the regulations in May 2023 giving industry a three-year lead-in period as required by the 2018 legislation.





Rachel Morrogh, Irish Cancer Society speaking at 'Get the Facts on the Label'.



Caterina Giorgi, CEO FARE, speaking at 'Get the Facts on the Label'.

AAI's advocacy work included:

- Commissioning polling data indicating the high level of public support (72%) for this measure
- Seeking meetings with politicians and policy makers
- Having PQs asked
- Events with expert speakers
- Highly visible campaign in both traditional and social media
- Working with the Tomar Foundation to develop a paid media advertising campaign
- Leading a national and international campaign of support from public health and consumer rights bodies in relation to submissions to the EU and to trade ministries across the globe
- Counteracting significant opposition from the global alcohol industry

AAI is continuing to monitor this issue as the matter is being discussed by the Barriers to Trade Committee of the WTO. However, Ireland's position has been strongly defended at Committee meetings by the EU and by the World Health Organisation. AAI is leading a campaign to ensure that public health advocates in countries which have raised queries about Ireland's regulation at the WTO contact their ministers for trade to highlight the public health issues of concern. AAI is also running a campaign urging alcohol producers to respect consumers' rights and introduce the labels ahead of the May 2026 deadline.



International labelling initiatives

Ireland's comprehensive health information labelling regulations are world-leading, particularly in relation to the cancer warning. The announcement was followed by intense media coverage worldwide and its progress is being closely watched internationally. It seems likely that other jurisdictions will follow suit with, for example, the Norwegian Directorate of Health making a recommendation to its government for cancer warnings to be included on alcohol products.

AAI has also worked closely with the European Alcohol Policy Alliance, Eurocare, to progress labelling of alcohol products across the EU. There have been moves in the EU to revise the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers to provide for nutritional information on alcohol products. AAI has contributed to a number of consultations on this. We also strongly endorsed the EU Beating Cancer plan with its proposal to have health warning labels before the end of 2023. However, progress in this area is slow. We were particularly disappointed that a report from the SANT Committee on reducing Non-Communicable Diseases was watered down in relation to its recommendations around alcohol, using very industry friendly language. Despite a significant campaign by public health advocates led by Eurocare which attracted the support of five of Ireland's MEPs, the report was accepted by the European Parliament in December 2023. With the

current parliament ending in June 2024, it is unlikely that there will be any further movement around labelling. This will be an area though, that, AAI will continue to advocate for in the new parliament, highlighting Ireland's leadership.

Advertising broadcast watershed

The second very significant advance was the commencement in November 2023 of Section 19 of the PHAA. This places a 9pm broadcast watershed for alcohol advertisements on television. On radio, the watershed will apply from midnight to 10am, and then from 3pm to midnight. The restrictions will come into force on 10 Jan 2025. Again, this followed a sustained campaign from AAI including, meetings with policy makers, commissioning of polling data showing the widespread support for the measure, Freedom of Information requests and high-profile media activity. AAI also worked with the Tomar Foundation's Drink is a Drug campaign in a series of eye-catching paid media campaigns.

The measure, although passed in 2018, required a period of consultation with the Department of Media. It is disappointing, though, that there will be such a lengthy wait for the measure particularly as the report of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland on the Children's Commercial Code found that Diageo is the number 4 broadcast advertiser to children.

Monitoring and evaluation of the PHAA

As highlighted above there has been some progress in the implementation of the PHAA though the pace is slow. At this stage the following measures are now in operation:

- Restrictions on placement of outdoor advertising, on children's clothing and in cinemas, operational from November 2019
- Structural separation of alcohol products in shops and supermarkets, operational from November 2020
- Ending of promotions to incentivise alcohol use, operational from January 2021
- Restrictions on alcohol advertising related to sporting activities, operational from November 2021
- Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol, operational from January 2022
- Notice to Health Service Executive in relation to applications for grant or renewal of license to sell alcohol, operational from November 2022
- Health information labelling of alcohol products - operational from May 2026
- Broadcast watershed for alcohol advertising - operational from Jan 2025

There is still no timeline around the commencement of the outstanding measures namely:

- Restrictions on content of alcohol advertisements
- Restrictions on advertising in publications

There is also a serious issue about the current restrictions being circumvented by the use of zero alcohol product advertising. These products have identical branding to their alcoholic versions and are being widely advertised in areas which have been restricted under the PHAA e.g. on public transport, on the field of play during sporting events and in shops outside the alcohol zone.

AAI has raised this issue with both the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive which has responsibility for monitoring and enforcing this element of the PHAA. Multiple complaints have been made by members of the public to the HSE on this issue as noted in the response to a PQ raised by AAI. A policy paper was developed by AAI which has been circulated to politicians and policy makers. In May 2023, the Minister for Health noted that such advertising was 'cynical' and committed to examining the issue. To date there has not been a satisfactory response and AAI will continue to advocate for comprehensive controls on advertising these products which can be considered a trojan horse.





Alcohol consumption levels

The original target when the legislation was first proposed in 2013 was for alcohol consumption to be reduced to a level of 9.1 litres per capita by 2020. Due to a combination of significant obstruction in the legislation being passed and indeed watered down from its original format and ongoing delays in it being implemented, this was not achieved. In 2023 the level of consumption was 9.90 litres per capita.

Alcohol use litres per capita >15 years



Public Health Alcohol Research Group

The former Minister for Health, Simon Harris, established the Public Health Alcohol Research Group. Its purpose was to provide recommendations in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the PHAA. AAI's CEO is a member of the group which submitted its final report to the current minister, Stephen Donnelly in June 2023. It is important that the recommendations from the group are implemented, particularly given the range of measures within the Act. Ireland's approach is being watched closely internationally and evidence from Ireland will help inform other jurisdictions about useful public health

approaches to harm from alcohol. Equally important is that the government is also seeking to make other policy changes around alcohol including changes to licensing hours through the Sale of Alcohol Bill. It is essential that before any such changes are made that the PHAA is implemented in full and evaluated.

Sale of Alcohol Bill

On 25 October 2022, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, brought forward plans to Cabinet for a General Scheme of a Sale of Alcohol Bill. There are significant concerns about a number of aspects of the Bill as proposed which are likely to lead to increased alcohol use and consequent increased alcohol harms. These include:

- i. The general extension of licensing hours of all bars/restaurants from 11.30pm to 12.30am
- ii. The facilitating of late-night opening of bars to 2.30am
- iii. The extension of nightclub hours to 6am
- iv. The introduction of cultural amenity licenses to venues not usually having a license
- v. The revoking of the requirement to extinguish a license before opening a new premises. This will increase the number and density of alcohol outlets.

It is clear that the intent of the Sale of Alcohol Bill is to increase the availability of alcohol which will lead to increased use and with that, increased harms. This is completely against stated government policy which aims to reduce alcohol use by 20%, a target that has not been achieved.

AAI wrote to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice with a detailed examination of the issues of concern and were invited to present evidence to the Committee in person in January 2023.

The Committee's report included a number of key recommendations made by AAI including:

- The need for a Health Impact Assessment of the Bill
- That all measures in the Public Health (Alcohol) Act should be commenced before any changes to licensing were made
- The introduction of a levy on the alcohol industry to pay for the harms from alcohol
- The establishment of an Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction

We have joined forces with multiple organisations who share our concerns and have contacted policy makers to highlight the issues across such areas as domestic violence, street violence, pressure on public services such as ambulances, Emergency Departments and Gardaí.



In May, AAI and Alcohol Forum Ireland held a joint event to mark the publication of a report by Prof Thomas Babor, the internationally renowned alcohol policy expert, who carried out an examination of the Bill. In July AAI convened a meeting of the members of the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland to agree a way forward in addressing the issues.

In July, AAI organised a meeting with Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland members and other interested parties with over 115 registering to attend including a number of politicians.

Government plans around the Bill have been delayed and the indications are that the Bill will be split into two bills with the first being brought forward in 2024. This will include a limited number of areas including changes to opening hours.

Given the serious threat which these proposals are to public health, this will be a key area for AAI in 2024.



Dr Ollie Bartlett, Assistant Professor Law, Maynooth University, speaking at the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland meeting on the Sale of Alcohol Bill.

Goal 2

A childhood free from alcohol harm

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 Department of Justice on the draft general scheme on the establishment of the domestic, sexual and gender-based violence agency bill and to Coimisiún na Meán call for inputs on developing the first online safety code. 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 Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) among children in Ireland – found to be the third highest rate in the world with a prevalence of 2.8-7.4% in the population. This aspect of alcohol harm remains very 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. We have highlighted this throughout the year and, in particular, have advocated for the labelling of alcohol

products with a pregnancy warning. We have sought to have PQs asked which highlight the lack of services in this area and called for a national strategy to address this issue.

AAI used the occasion of Ireland's appearance before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 24-25 Jan 2023 to draw attention to FASD, the need for services for those impacts by alcohol harm in the home and in calling for full implementation of PHAA particularly around labelling and advertising restrictions. A press release was issued and a detailed opinion piece published on website. AAI had worked with the Children's Rights Alliance to ensure alcohol issues were raised.

The Committee expressed concern at high levels of FASD in Ireland. The response from government emphasised the need for a whole of population approach to reducing alcohol use and pointed to PHAA legislation in this area and a new programme of work from HSE around FASD.

Silent Voices

AAI's 'Silent Voices' initiative aims to raise awareness and understanding of the specific issues for the estimated one million + children and 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, ISPC and in the UK, National Association of Children of Alcoholics, NACOA, to develop policies and raise awareness. In 2023, AAI was very pleased to appoint long-term social activist and academic, Ailbhe Smyth as a patron of Silent Voices.



Ailbhe Smyth - patron of Silent Voices.



In 2023 a new policy briefing was developed - Problem alcohol use in the home, the invisible victims of alcohol harm. This was widely distributed to politicians, policy makers and other organisations working in this space. Its recommendations include:

- i. Need for whole of government approach
- ii. HSE and Tusla, Hidden Harm approach requires momentum and urgency with clear targets and funding
- iii. Training for all professionals such as teachers, GPs, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists
- iv. Development of a framework for trauma informed services
- v. Recognition of the link between alcohol and domestic violence and its impact on children
- vi. Ensuring that the voices of experience are included in policy development in this area

National Awareness Week: End the Silence

A key area for Silent Voices is the annual End the Silence Awareness Week now in its third year and firmly established with multiple organisations involved. There was a very significant set of events and activities in October 2023 with a particular focus on the impact of parental problem alcohol use on children's mental health. Events included:

- 'Joining the Dots' webinar which looked at how childhood adversity impacts mental health and what we can do to support young people. It was chaired by Ombudsman for Children Dr Niall Muldoon and featuring Prof Trevor Spratt (TCD), Dr Cian Aherne (Jigsaw), Christa McCutcheon (Maynooth University), and Fiona Coyle (CEO of Mental Health Reform).





Christa McCutcheon, Maynooth University, speaking at 'Joining the Dots'.



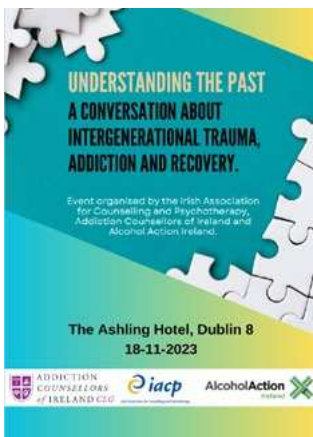
Justina Murray, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs, speaking at 'Invisible Victims'.

- 'Triple Trauma in the Home', was an in-person gathering which discussed how children are impacted when domestic violence, mental health and problem alcohol use co-occur in the home. This event was chaired by Silent Voices Patron, Ailbhe Smyth, and featured contributions from Sarah Morton (Director of the Community Drugs Programme, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD), Rachel Fayne (DAVINA project), Senator Frances Black (RISE) and Sarah Rush (Barnardos).
- 'Invisible Victims' webinar featured contributions from Dr Judith Butler (MUT), Dr Cassey Muir (Newcastle University) and Dr Justina Murray (CEO of Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs). This event dealt with the issues surrounding listening to the voices of children growing up with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

There was extensive media coverage during the week with 70 mentions across national and regional media and significant social media activity. Alongside this there was a new podcast released - Listening to Children with Cian Aherne, Jigsaw and Cassie Muir, Newcastle University in conversation with Jennifer Hough.

Understand the past: A conversation about intergenerational trauma, addiction and recovery. IACP/ACI/AAI

Continuing with the theme of mental health, AAI partnered with Addiction Counsellors of Ireland and the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy in November 2023 to hold a full-day in-person event which was attended by over 150. There is a clear demand for in-depth training in this area.



Silent Voices, co-founder, Barbara Whelan, speaking at the event, 'Understanding the Past'.



Marion Rackard, co-founder of Silent Voices, speaking at 'Understanding the Past'



Operation Encompass

As part of the Silent Voices initiative, there has been extensive advocacy for the introduction of Operation Encompass which is a programme 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.

There is strong support for the proposal from organisations such as the Children’s Rights Alliance, Irish Association of Social Workers, INTO, ISPC, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection in relation to the need for Operation Encompass.

Following our sustained campaigning, led by Silent Voices co-founder, Carol Fawsitt, consideration of this programme was included in the new Domestic Violence Strategy published in 2022. During 2023, there was considerable engagement with Department of Justice officials on this matter which is very welcome.

There is a lack of urgency though, in progressing this straightforward, low-cost measure which has the potential to make a significant difference to the lives of traumatised children.

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. 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 the marketing of alcohol in such a way that captures young people and in particular its linkage to youth interests such as sports, music and other cultural events. Online marketing is especially powerful in this context with children being targeted through these interests with alcohol advertising. Digital advertising is far more harmful for children than any other form. Estimates suggest that by the time a child turns 13, advertisers already hold over 72 million data points about him/her, and the surveillance advertising industry for children is worth in excess of \$1 billion.

AAI advocated strongly with legislators for advertising curbs to be incorporated in the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act which was passed in December 2022. Within the legislation there is provision for a body to be established which will produce codes which may prohibit or restrict commercial communications relation to foods or beverages considered to be the subject of public concern in respect of the general public health interests of children. During 2023, AAI engaged with the newly established Coimisiún na Meán in relation to their call for inputs on developing its first online safety code. A key recommendation is that alcohol brands must be prohibited from collecting data on young people and must provide evidence that they are not tracking and profiling young people.

Goal 3

Services for all affected by alcohol harm

Alcohol has serious implications for 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.

Of significant concern is the lack of services compared with the scale of alcohol problems in Ireland. For example, Health Research Board data indicates that nearly 15% of the population have an alcohol use disorder (AUD). This corresponds to approximately 578,000 people with 90,000 having a severe AUD problem. However, in 2022, only 3265 new cases were treated and the total number of cases receiving treatment was 7421. Throughout the year, AAI has brought attention to the need for widespread timely availability of appropriate, trauma-informed services.

Voices of Recovery

A major new initiative from AAI was launched in 2023 - Voices of Recovery. The initiative, led by people in recovery from alcohol harm, aims to remove the stigma around getting treatment for alcohol problems and to drive evidence-based policy change on issues such as better alcohol treatment services, curbs on alcohol marketing and holding the alcohol industry to account for the harm its product causes. Membership of Voices of Recovery is open to all who self-declare that they have a minimum of two years continuous sobriety at the time of application and who support the work of AAI by signing our Charter. We really appreciate the very valuable and public contributions from our first ten signatories.

1st Ten signatories

1. Paddy Creedon

Recovery advocate and Board member of Alcohol Action Ireland

2. Gary O’Heaire

Recovery advocate and COO Tiglin.

3. Senator Frances Black

Recovery advocate and founder of the Rise Foundation, which is focused on family members of those with addictive behaviour.

4. Keith Cassidy

Recovery advocate and clinic manager, Smarmore Castle

5. Kenneth Egan OLY

Recovery advocate, Olympic Medal winner and psychotherapist.

6. Shane McVicker

Recovery advocate, musician and musical director

7. Val Ward

Recovery advocate

8. Mary Coughlan

Recovery advocate and musician

9. Danielle Hughes

Recovery advocate

10. Dr. Stephen Dansiger

Recovery advocate

A highlight of the year was undoubtedly the Dublin launch of Voices Recovery. The concert with musical director, Shane McVicker, featured the Dublin Gospel Choir as well as contributions from Darragh Waters, Kenneth Egan, Frances Black, Keith Cassidy, Val Ward, Stephen Dansiger and very special guest, Colm Basquel along with the Sam Maguire Cup!





Paddy Creedon, speaking at the Dublin launch of Voices of Recovery



Dublin Senior GAA footballer, Colm Basquel with Sam Maguire at the Dublin launch of Voices of Recovery

Other activities with Voices of Recovery included Board members Prof Frank Murray and Paddy Creedon presenting on alcohol issues at an event with the South-East Regional Drug and Alcohol Taskforce in Wicklow, production of a podcast and significant media and social media activity around the initiative.

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery. A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025

Following a mid-term review of the government’s main strategy in relation to alcohol there was a proposal to establish a number of strategic implementation groups. AAI’s CEO was invited to join Group 6 whose aim is to ‘Strengthen evidence-informed and outcomes focussed practice, services, policies and strategy implementation.’ The group is setting out a programme of work in this area to be carried out over the remainder of the term of the strategy. A key goal of AAI in this regard is to have a mapping of alcohol treatment services carried out and we were pleased to note the government commitment to this in 2023.

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.

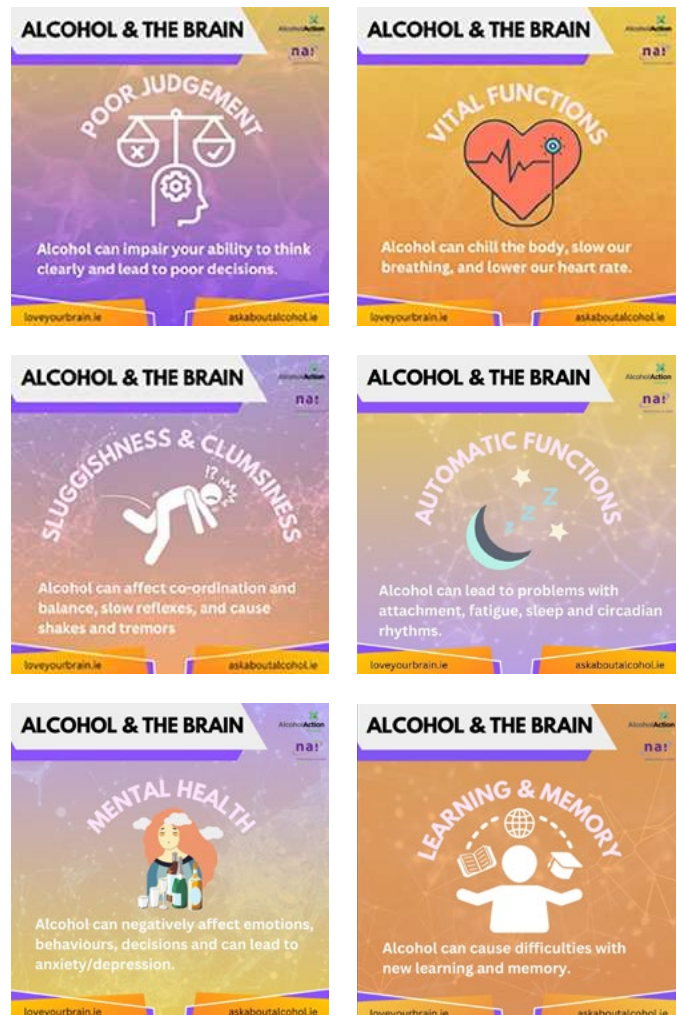
AAI’s CEO is a member of the Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative, under the chairmanship of Dr John Ryan, consultant hepatologist, which is seeking to

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.

Alcohol and the brain

AAI continued its work to raise awareness of the issues around Korsakoffs Syndrome (KS) – a neurological condition which is a profound impairment in making new memories. It arises from low levels of thiamine in the diet which is itself often a direct consequence of high levels of alcohol use. In partnership with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland and Bloomfield Mental Health Services there was ongoing contact with the HSE. One of the main problems with this very neglected condition is the lack of ‘ownership’ of it within the HSE as it has fallen between a number of areas. As a result of meetings there was a commitment that the HSE Neuro-rehab Strategy would include KS with a view to creating a work stream around this.

AAI also worked with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland and the HSE on an alcohol/brain social media campaign for the LoveYourBrain Brain Health week in March.



Goal 4

Establishment of a state sponsored Office to lead on alcohol policy

There are many 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 seeks 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.

During the year AAI raised the issue of an Alcohol Office at a senior government level including with the Chief Medical Officer, the Minister of Health and with politicians across multiple parties. The need for this was highlighted in media contributions, reports and submissions. AAI developed a number of discussion papers for use in this area.



Labour Party Health Spokesperson, Duncan Smith with Dr Sheila Gilheany, CEO AAI.



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 pointing to issues around involvement with the development of government policy in areas such as sustainable food, despite alcohol not being a food stuff.

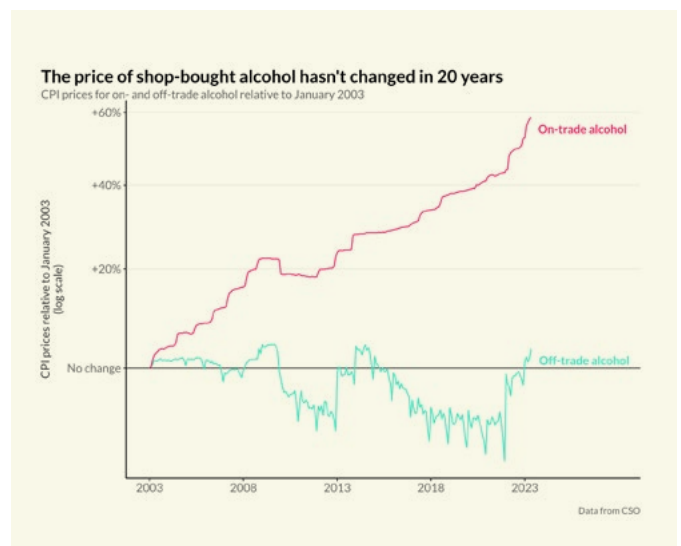
AAI worked with a range of organisations to advance these issues. In November 2023, AAI was a founding member of the newly established Health Promotion Alliance Network. This is a broad coalition of organisations with a shared interest in advocating for major policy change to promote the primary prevention of chronic disease through controls across a number of industries producing unhealthy commodities such as tobacco, alcohol and junk food. AAI also participated in a number of meetings with academics in Trinity College Dublin on the issue of the commercial determinants of health – an emerging field of study which provides an insight into the forces at play in relation to health matters.

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.

Alcohol Affordability Report

Alcohol Action Ireland published in July 2023 a report commissioned from the University of Sheffield which examined both the price of alcohol and its affordability over the past two decades. Using data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the report noted that overall, alcohol prices have kept pace closely with inflation although there are different experiences between on trade (i.e. pubs and restaurants) and off-trade (supermarkets, shops and off-licences).

While headline figures show increases in alcohol prices a key area highlighted in the report is the affordability of alcohol. This was examined by looking at the relative



prices of alcohol compared to other goods along with a measure of disposable household income. This 'affordability index' is widely used internationally. The data from Ireland indicates that on-trade affordability has increased by just over 14% while off-trade alcohol has become 67% more affordable in the past two decades.

The report also noted that while alcohol duty rates are higher than they were 20 years ago, when adjusted for inflation their value has actually fallen considerably.

Pre-budget submission

This was prepared, submitted to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform and circulated widely in September. Building on the finding of the Alcohol Affordability report 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 health taxes has been put forward by the Commission on Taxation and Welfare in its 2022 report as a key measure to reduce the consumption of health harming products such as alcohol. Such a levy was also a recommendation of the Oireachtas Justice Committee in its pre-legislative scrutiny of the Sale of Alcohol bill. Meanwhile there is legislation in train to provide for a social responsibility levy on gambling activity to fund education and treatment services. In addition, the 'polluter pays' concept has precedent in other parts of the economy for example in recycling schemes.



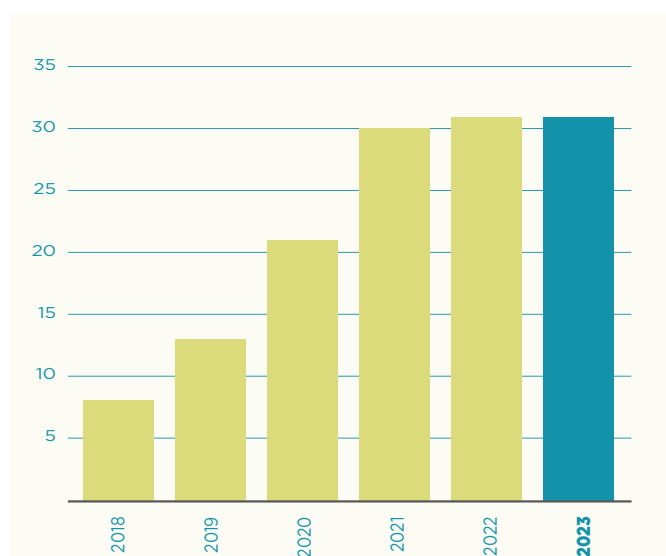
An examination of the lobbying register noted significant contact between the alcohol industry and the Department of Finance in the run up to the Budget who lobbied intensively for a reduction in alcohol duties. During the same period no contact between the Department of Health and the Department of Finance was found through freedom of information requests. While the alcohol industry did not achieve their aim of a reduction, neither was there any increase in excise duties which have remained at the same level for a decade.

Given that alcohol excise duties raise only €1.2 billion annually compared with the burden of alcohol on the state of at least €3.7 billion annually it is clear that public health considerations must be at the heart of any alcohol policy in Ireland yet there does not appear to be a formal mechanism for public health input to such decisions. This points again to the need for the establishment of an Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction which would drive policy in this area and provide a co-ordination mechanism across government departments.

Policy statements

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. This policy research is essential to the mission of Alcohol Action Ireland and is the basis for all our advocacy work.

Reports and submissions



Reports and policy statements in 2023

- [AAI Annual Review 2022](#)
- [AAI Annual Report and audited accounts 2022](#)
- [AAI's response to Scottish Government's Minimum Unit Pricing \(MUP\) continuation and future pricing consultation](#)
- [Addressing barriers to alcohol treatment.](#)
- [Alcohol Affordability Ireland: an analysis of changes in alcohol prices, taxation and affordability in Ireland](#)
- [Alcohol and domestic violence](#)
- [Alcohol Office Policy Briefing](#)
- [Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, codes and rules submission](#)
- [Budget 2024 Briefing](#)
- [Children have a right to a childhood free from alcohol harm - that right is not being upheld](#)
- [Citizens' Assembly on drugs Submission](#)
- [Coimisiún Na Meán online safety submission](#)
- [Deconstructing false narratives and tactics of industry](#)
- [EU Mental Health call for evidence submission](#)
- [Getting the facts - on the label and in the media](#)
- [Hidden Harm Policy Analysis](#)
- [Mental health and alcohol](#)
- [Opening address to Oireachtas Justice Committee pre-legislative scrutiny of General Scheme of Alcohol Bill](#)
- [Policy briefing - Problem alcohol use in the home. The invisible victims of alcohol harm.](#)
- [Polluter pays is a great idea - now lets start charging the alcohol industry](#)
- [Sale of alcohol bill - a reflection](#)
- [Sale of Alcohol bill polling report](#)
- [Scotland MUP Consultation - AAI Response](#)
- [Scottish Alcohol Marketing Consultation Submission](#)
- [Stakeholders' Targeted Consultation EU4Health Annual Work Programme 2024](#)
- [Submission on the Draft General Scheme of a DSGBV Agency Bill](#)
- [Voices of recovery initiative will harness lived experience to drive policy change](#)
- [We know who will carry the burden; We know who will pick up the tab. Sale of Alcohol bill](#)
- [Zero alcohol marketing has zero benefits for everyone except the global alcohol industry](#)
- [Zero Alcohol Policy Briefing](#)
- [Zero alcohol product marketing will not take Ireland off the leaderboard for alcohol harm](#)

International networks and events

AFINET – Addiction and the Family International Network

AAI's CEO was invited to make a presentation about the Silent Voices initiative at AFINET's international conference in Rotterdam, 14-26 June.

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. AAI contributed to discussions between members and to their regular news bulletins on alcohol policy.

Alcohol Healthwatch New Zealand - Forum event

AAI's CEO was invited to make a presentation on Ireland's alcohol policy to this group.

Alcohol Policy Network

AAI is a member of the Alcohol Policy Network. AAI was invited to take part in an event with this network and with the European Centre on Monitoring Alcohol Marketing events on labelling and digital marketing, in Vilnius, June 2023.

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 participated in a number of workshops around this area.

Community Alcohol Strategy Steering Committee – Prince Albert, Canada

AAI's CEO was invited to meet this group to provide insight to alcohol issues and advocacy.

DIS Study Aboard Programme, Public Health

This is a programme organised by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. AAI has provided input on public health alcohol policy to the DIS Study Abroad Programme which included a week-long visit to Dublin for USA students in July.

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 2023 as well as taking part in a significant event in the EU parliament on the commercial determinants of health. 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, 28 November-2 December which is co-ordinated by Eurocare, providing input to its information campaign.

EuroHealthNet Sante Publique

AAI's CEO was invited to take part in an event in Paris in June along with representative from the HSE Alcohol Programme to give an overview of developments in Ireland in relation to alcohol policy.

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

AAI is a member of EPHA and throughout the year participated in meetings. AAI's CEO was invited to contribute to an event on alcohol labelling in Brussels in June 2023 and EPHA's Empower Health event in September. Input was also provided to a number of policy submissions re alcohol including EPHA's response to European Parliament Health Committee draft report on Non-Communicable Diseases

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Australia

There was ongoing contact between FARE and AAI throughout 2023 particularly around the campaigns in both countries on labelling of alcohol products with health warnings. The CEO of FARE contributed to an AAI event on labelling in May 2023.

Institute for Social Marketing and Health (ISM), University of Stirling

AAI's CEO contributed to discussion panels on alcohol policy in Brazil and Peru which were organised by colleagues at the Institute for Social Marketing.

Scottish Assembly – Non-Communicable Diseases Cross-Party Inquiry Meeting 16 March 2023

AAI's CEO was invited to give a presentation on Ireland's experience around alcohol legislation to this group as part of a session on alcohol marketing.

Spanish Presidency EU – Sectoral Conference on health promotion to address chronic illness. Zaragoza. 7 Nov 2023

AAI's CEO was invited to speak on Ireland's alcohol legislation.

Virtual Expert Network Group on Alcohol Marketing

AAI's CEO is a member of this group, organised by the Scottish body Alcohol Focus, to help provide evidence and recommendations for the Scottish Government. AAI also made a detailed submission to the Scottish consultation on alcohol marketing.

World Health Organization (WHO)

AAI's CEO was an invited speaker at a number of WHO events including at the European Health Forum, Gastein as part of a discussion on labelling of alcohol products and invited to chair a workshop at the 16th European Public Health Conference Nov 2023, which was held in Dublin. Workshop on 'How can the public health community contribute to better alcohol policies through trade law.'

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 Act and then subsequent development of communications codes through the consultation process with Coimisiún na Meán.

Growing up in Ireland

AAI's head of policy and advocacy was invited to join Growing Up in Ireland Research and Practice Expert Advisory Group. AAI has advocated that questions around problem alcohol use in the home be asked to the upcoming age 17 cohort. This suggestion was included.

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 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.

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 2023. AAI's CEO was a speaker at the IPH's event on liver disease.

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, through its Silent Voices initiative, has worked closely with colleagues in the School of Education in developing a website of resources for trauma informed education.

Men's Health Forum Planning Group – Men's Health Week 2023

AAI sits on the Men's Health Forum planning group that organises this annual All-Island awareness event. Men's Health Week ran from 12-18 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 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. AAI's CEO is a member the Board of Mental Health Reform and AAI's head of policy and advocacy is a member of MHR's policy advisory group. In 2023 AAI was pleased to take part in MHR's member's showcase event.



Jennifer Hough, AAI's Head of policy and advocacy, speaking at the PEIN summit.

Prevention and Early Intervention Network

AAI is a member of 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 Head of Policy and Advocacy was appointed to the executive committee and acts as chair of PEIN's communications sub-committee. She was a speaker at their national 2-day conference in Sept 2023, which brought together national and international expertise together to explore the issues of child and family adversities and prevention and early intervention.

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. The Group reported to the Minister for Health in July 2023.

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

AAI invited to give a talk on alcohol issues to pharmacy students.

Trinity College Dublin

AAI was invited to contribute to a TCD course re ethics in sport and media. AAI also participated in a number of meetings and events with TCD academic staff on issues around the commercial determinants of health.

University College Cork

AAI was part of a successful application to the Health Research Board for funding to support a HRB fellowship to examine improving public health through better implementation of alcohol policy: A multimethod study examining and addressing the factors influencing successful implementation.

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 2023 we developed our 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.

AAI has a podcast series 'Alcohol Uncovered, 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 2023 the series was extended to include episodes on:

- Commercial influence on alcohol consumption.
- End the Silence – listening to children who experience parental problem alcohol use
- Voices of Recovery



Media Releases

Throughout the year AAI issued 26 media releases on a variety of topics including the Sale of Alcohol Bill, broadcast watershed for alcohol advertising, health warning labelling of alcohol products, treatment services, domestic violence and alcohol, the issues of children growing up in homes impacted by alcohol harm and the need for trauma informed systems across public services.

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 2023 we had:

Broadcast

211

contributions to local and national radio and television programmes;

Press

109

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

Online

286

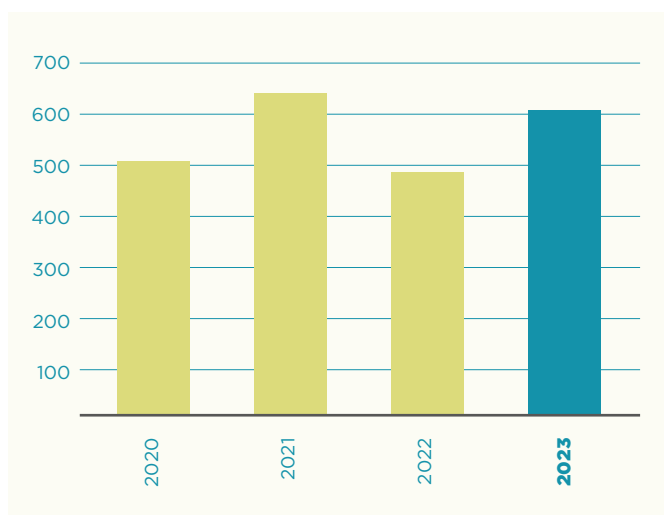
contributions

The earned media value of all press and online features was

and estimated audience reach of

€2.6 million 71.2 million.

Traditional media items-broadcast and press



AAI Newsletter

Regular newsletters were sent to our stakeholders throughout the year. Signups for updates grew by 31% in 2023.

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.

Social Media Profile

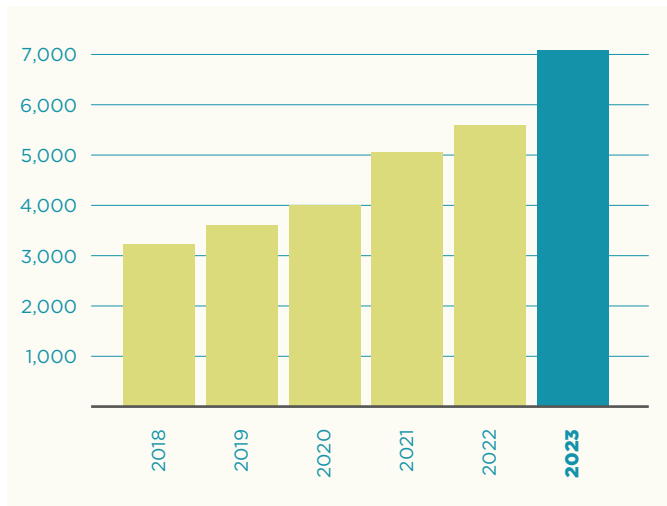
Social media is an important element in our communications, particularly for political advocacy.

Total Twitter/X activity overview:

842,8000	4315	7113
impressions	link clicks	total followers

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

Twitter followers



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 2023 providing oversight and specialist input to the work of AAI. Full details of its activities are outlined in AAI's Audited Accounts.

AAI is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code.

The way ahead

2023 was the fourth year of implementing our five-year plan and much has been achieved across its five goals although there is a significant threat to this progress from proposals in the Sale of Alcohol Bill. In 2024 we will have a particular focus on advocating for a public health focus in the Bill as well as continuing the schedule of work in our plan.

We will maintain a strong focus on the imperative for the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018. Ireland is being closely watched in relation to its ground-breaking regulations on health information labelling. However, this progress must be maintained against a backdrop of ferocious opposition from vested interests, and this will require determined advocacy both in Ireland and globally.

There are also threats to the intent of the Act by the slow progress in relation to advertising restrictions implementation and the marketing of zero-alcohol products using shared branding with alcohol products. We will continue to press for legislation to address this.

With our Silent Voices initiative, we will build on our 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 the development of training for professionals working with those impacted by alcohol harm in the home and the need for early intervention approaches.

There are major gaps in services for all impacted by alcohol harm, in particular the thousands of children and adults living with FASD. There is also a need to ensure that the lived experience of children in relation to alcohol is included in policy development and we will seek opportunities to develop research work in this area. We will also work on issues around access to alcohol services and seek to include the voice of those in recovery in our work.

We will continue to advocate for a revision of the current low-risk drinking guidelines. We will seek political support for these and other issues round alcohol harm. All of this work will also inform and highlight the need for a statutory Alcohol Office. This will be key area to develop in the run up to the next General Election.

We will develop our information base through a series of webinars which will explore alcohol 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 in 2023 from the HSE, Hospital Saturday Fund and from individual donations. In 2024, 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 2023

	DRAFT			AUDITED		
	Unrestricted 2023 €	Restricted 2023 €	TOTAL 2023 €	Unrestricted 2022 €	Restricted 2022 €	TOTAL 2022 €
Income from Charitable Activities	248,544	0	248,544	240,140	20,446	260,586
GRANTS						
Donations & Legacies						
DONATIONS	5,856	0	5,856	13,476	0	13,476
Other Income	7,929	0	7,929	6,291	0	6,291
Total Income	262,329	0	262,329	259,907	20,446	280,353
Expenditure						
On charitable activities	(272,278)	(3,431)	(275,709)	(267,154)	(22,150)	(289,304)
NET (Expenditure)/Income	(9,949)	(3,431)	(13,380)	(7,247)	(1,704)	(8,951)
Fund balances at beginning of year	144,505	20,488	164,993	151,752	22,192	173,944
Transfer of Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund balances at end of year	134,556	17,057	151,613	144,505	20,488	164,993

These figures have not been audited. The full audited accounts will be published on the AAI website when available.

Other information

Company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

Company No: 378738. CHY: 15342.

Registered Charity Number: 20052713.

Alcohol Action Ireland

Registered Office:

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E: admin@alcoholactionireland.ie

W: alcoholireland.ie

Alcohol Action Ireland Team in 2023

Dr Sheila Gilheany	CEO
Jennifer Hough	Head of Policy and Advocacy
Hannah-Alice Loughlin resigned Sept 2023	Communications
Conor Keane appointed Oct 2023	

Board members of Alcohol Action Ireland

Prof Frank Murray	(Current Chair) Consultant in Hepatology & Gastroenterology. M.B., B.Ch. B.A.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., F.R.C.P. (Ed)
Catherine Brogan	Former Deputy CEO, Mental Health Ireland
Pat Cahill	(Company Secretary), former President Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
Paddy Creedon	Recovery Advocate
Michael Foy	Head of Finance, Commission for Communications Regulation
Prof Jo-Hanna Ivers	Professor of Addiction, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin
Marie-Claire McAleer	Policy and Research, Merchants Quay (resigned Nov 2023)
Dr Colin O'Driscoll	Clinical Lead, HSE Mid-West Addiction Services
Dr Mary O'Mahony,	Specialist in Public Health Medicine and Medical Officer of Health, HSE South
Dr Bobby Smyth	Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
Tadhg Young	Financial Services Executive (resigned June 2023)
Anita Whyte (appointed Nov 2023)	HSE Programme Manager for the National Clinical Programme for Dual Diagnosis

Silent Voices Advisory Group Members

Carol Fawsitt (resigned Oct 2023)

Marion Rackard

Barbara Whelan

Colin O'Driscoll



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