



Drug and Alcohol Misuse in Scotland

We believe that every person with an addiction deserves a chance to be free from the substance that controls them

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered charity present in 700 communities throughout the UK, including 75 in Scotland.

We engage in a programme of practical action to serve the community and help those who are in need, whether practically, emotionally or spiritually.

We provide a range of services tailored to the needs of those who are homeless, unemployed, people with addictions, older people, those seeking to be reunited with a family member, victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, victims of major emergencies, emergency responders and local community members.

We also engage in the democratic process to fight for greater social justice for those we seek to serve.

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Our approach

The Salvation Army has been supporting people with addictions since its earliest days in the nineteenth century. The context may be different today, but addiction still blights people's lives and impacts their families.

Our Scotland Drug and Alcohol Strategy (SDAS) operates floating support in four locations and aims to support people recovering from addiction by creating a safe community in which to live, by analysing the clients' problems and by helping them to break away from traditional behavioural patterns and to learn new coping behaviours. An important factor is the involvement of significant others in the recovery process.

The next phase of the strategy is to establish a centre of excellence at the University of Stirling. This will be a hub to research relevant issues, to co-ordinate, train and monitor the floating support work, to identify and implement future strategy and to act as a professional voice in relationships with local and central government, statutory providers and other agencies.

Our services

We operate floating support services in Aberdeen, Greenock, Stenhousemuir and Stirling. More locations are planned. Each service is based in one of our corps (churches), which provides a range of community activities, a source of volunteers to assist the support worker and a chaplaincy service to provide a listening ear and pastoral support.

Each of our ten homelessness residential services (Lifehouses) in Scotland support service users who are battling with addiction. There are opportunities to attend drug and alcohol groups as well as to receive individual support. Service users will be referred for specialist medical treatment if needed.

Alan's story

Alan had a loving family, a nice house, a car and a good job – but he lost it all through his addiction to alcohol. His relationship with his partner broke down and he was not able to see his daughter. Despite this, he denied he had a problem. In the end he stopped working and was unable to pay any bills. Soon he was homeless.

Eventually Alan was referred to The Salvation Army who helped him through detox and rehabilitation.

Eight years on and he is in a much better place. He is continuing to receive support through The Salvation Army's Greenock floating support service.

Alan says, 'If I've got any problems they're there at the end of the phone. Or I can come in at any time to get a coffee and talk to my support worker. They helped me get a flat. I got back in touch with my brother and we patched things up, and I've made contact with my daughter. I've learned to enjoy life and gradually I've got better'.



Floating support service, Greenock

Drug misuse in Scotland

The illegal use of drugs causes significant health problems, such as dependency, overdosing, mental health problems, injecting-related injuries and the transmission of communicable diseases. It also leads to significant social problems, such as crime, prostitution, unemployment, family breakdown and homelessness.

The most recent statistics for problem drug use in Scotland are from 2010:¹

- There were an estimated 59,600 individuals with problem drug use (an increase from 55,300 in 2006)
- Problem drug among those aged 35 to 64 years old increased from 34% in 2006 to 43% in 2010

Recent years have seen the rapid emergence of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) also known as 'legal highs', which are a major challenge because they are 'easy to access, low cost, and are associated with negative psychological and behavioural impacts.'²

Alcohol misuse in Scotland

According to Scottish Government data:³

- Alcohol consumption has increased by 5% since 1994
- Almost a fifth more alcohol is sold per adult in Scotland than in England and Wales
- The impact of excessive consumption in terms of health, social care, crime, productive capacity and wider costs is £3.6 billion a year (£900 per adult in Scotland)
- Hospital discharges have quadrupled since the early 1980s and alcohol-related deaths are 1.4 times higher
- 45% of prisoners (including two thirds of young offenders) were drunk at the time of their offence

The 2014 *Scottish Health Survey* showed:⁴

- 86% of men and 82% of women drink alcohol (down from 92% and 87% in 2003)
- 23% of men and 17% of women were classified as hazardous/harmful drinkers (consuming more than 21 units per week for men, or more than 14 units per week for women). These figures have not changed significantly in recent years. (Note: From January 2016 men are advised not to drink more than 14 units per week).

¹<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Drugs-and-Alcohol-Misuse/Publications/2011-11-29/2011-11-29-DrugPrevalence-Report.pdf?1371401549>

²https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/9258335/Youth_Homelessness_in_the_UK.pdf, page 11

³<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Services/Alcohol>

⁴<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00485546.pdf>

Our policy recommendations

Successive Scottish Governments have recognised the seriousness of drug and alcohol misuse and have taken significant steps to tackle the problems. (See *The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem, 2008* and *The Alcohol Framework for Action, 2009*).

There is scope for more to be done, however, and we recommend the following actions in the area of alcohol policy:

1. People with drinking problems require ongoing support during recovery. We ask for a significant increase in the number and availability of recovery-based treatment centres/programmes. In particular, we want to see more specialist community-based alcohol services to meet alcohol treatment and rehabilitation needs.
2. Research shows that young people's exposure to alcohol advertising influences their decision to drink and their level of drinking. We do not believe that self-regulation of marketing and voluntary retail codes are effective. We recommend that the advertising of alcohol in public places, including sponsorship of sports events and festivals, be banned.
3. The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013 revealed that around half of Scots did not know the number of alcohol units in a pint of beer, measure of spirits or a glass of wine. Only 42% of men and 43% of women correctly identified the recommended daily consumption limits for their gender. We recommend that more emphasis is put on raising awareness about alcohol issues and safe drinking levels. This should be done independently of the alcohol industry.
4. We ask for a significant proportion of the label (e.g. one third) on every alcohol product to include a health warning produced by an independent regulatory body – and for every label to include information about the product's nutritional, calorie and alcohol content.

