

Alcohol-related deaths falling in Wales

The Welsh Government's Annual Statement of Progress for Liver Disease shows that in 2015, 807 people died from liver disease, an increase of 131 deaths (19.4%) over the past five years. Alcohol-related liver disease accounts for over a third of liver disease deaths.

However, the report shows a fall in alcohol-related deaths, from 504 in 2012 to 463 in 2015.

The report also shows:

- **Reduced alcohol consumption:** Over the past five years, there has been a reduction in the number of adults reporting alcohol consumption above the former recommended daily guidelines, from 44% in 2010 to 40% in 2015 – however far too many people report drinking above the former recommended guidelines and this will continue to be a focus for NHS Wales.
- **Increased expenditure on liver disease:** Spending on gastrointestinal problems (which include liver disease) has increased from £339.3 million in 2014-15 to £362.6 million in 2015-16.
- **Improved access to treatment for hepatitis C infection:** There is no restriction on access to treatment for hepatitis C infection in Wales, making Wales the only country in the UK, and one of the few in the world, to not place such a restriction. All of the patients with hepatitis C that are known to services in Wales and who are still accessing care have now been treated. During 2016-17, 772 individuals were treated for the hepatitis C infection in Wales with a cure rate of around 95%.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, we want to reduce the number of people getting and dying from liver disease. We want to ensure people – whatever their age – value good liver health, and are aware of the dangers of excess alcohol, obesity and blood borne viral hepatitis. We want everyone to take personal responsibility for their lifestyle choices and reduce the risk of acquiring preventable liver disease.

“During 2015-16 there has been continued progress in the care of patients with liver disease in Wales. We've seen a reduction in the number of alcohol-related deaths over recent years, but we know there's much more to do.

“Services are improving throughout Wales, despite dealing with complex demand. The service needs to continue to undergo change if it is to cope with patients and their needs.”