

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.”

Heritage sector worth over £900m to Wales

The report, which collects data from 18 of Wales' premier Heritage organisations, and highlights an increase of 4.4% in the number of visits to sites in the last seven years has been welcomed by Economy Secretary Ken Skates.

He said:

"This report captures the crucial role of the heritage sector in Wales, which has helped inspire and define our nation.

"It's fantastic to see the sector going from strength to strength. Heritage in Wales is now worth over £960m and supports over 40,500 jobs with membership of heritage bodies in Wales now standing just short of 440,000.

"The sector is increasingly ready and willing to innovate and embrace different ways for the public to engage with and enjoy our rich heritage. Indeed many of our magnificent sites have played a central role in the successes of our recent Year of Legends and Year of Adventure tourism campaigns.

"In Wales we have a unique, diverse heritage which is the envy of many and a source of great pride to us all. We will continue to work closely with the sector to support them in ensuring that these positive trends continue."

Economy Secretary calls on leaders of the Welsh Economy to be the spark for innovation and entrepreneurship

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates launched BeTheSpark – a Wales-wide movement aimed at unlocking the potential for greater collaboration between entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, risk capital, academia and government to support the creation of more home grown profitable businesses.

In 2015 Wales successfully applied to join the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program (REAP).

BeTheSpark is a direct result of Wales' participation in REAP and aims to connect all key partners to support the right conditions for innovation driven entrepreneurship in Wales. [BeTheSpark](#) (external link) provides a designated way to share world class ideas, exchange tips and identify suitable solutions to deliver change.

With simplicity, connectivity and visibility at its centre, the programme is seeking to drive job creation and provide a boost to regional economies through increased innovation and entrepreneurial activity.

Delegates at the event had the chance to engage with the Economy Secretary, Ken Skates as well as with a panel of successful leaders and entrepreneurs including Gocompare founder Hayley Parsons, Alacrity Chairman, Simon Gibson, IQE CEO, Drew Nelson OBE and James Taylor founder of the child development organisation SuperStars.

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, and Skills and Science Minister, Julie James also addressed delegates at the event.

Ken Skates said:

"I was pleased to be joined by 300 leaders in the Welsh economy for this launch of BeThe Spark.

"BeTheSpark provides key figures with an interest in driving forward entrepreneurship and innovation with a genuine opportunity to work together in meaningful partnership through the sharing of ideas and knowledge.

"Entrepreneurship and innovation driven enterprises are crucial to the health and future of our economy. This event and programme is about harnessing our collective power and doing all we can across the economy to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship so that it flourishes across Wales."

[First Minister in Gibraltar to discuss common Brexit priorities](#)

While in Gibraltar, the First Minister will also meet with the Governor Lieutenant General Edward Grant Martin Davis, Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia, the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Gibraltar's economy is thriving, with the 4th highest GDP per head in the world at £54,979. However, it is highly dependent on its unique relationship with the EU and UK – with 40% of its workforce entering Gibraltar from Spain each day.

The First Minister said:

“While Gibraltar is in a unique position, we in Wales share common ground on the UK's future relationship with Europe and our approach to leaving the EU.

“We share their determination to secure a path in the Brexit negotiations which protects our ability to trade. We also recognise the positive contribution EU citizens make to life in Wales and, like Gibraltar, Wales will continue to need workers from EU countries to help sustain our economy and public services.

“This visit is also an opportunity to learn from Gibraltar's experience of operating outside the Customs Union and understand the potential risks and issues we would face if the UK took the same path post-Brexit.

“As we prepare to leave the EU, it is essential all parts of the UK and Gibraltar work together to map out a way forward that meets all our needs.”

“People who suffer out of hospital cardiac arrest must be given the best chance of survival” – Health Secretary Vaughan Gething

The Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OCHA) Plan sets out the key actions that should be taken to improve a person's chance of survival from cardiac arrest.

Called the Chain of Survival, actions include:

- Prompt recognition and call for help;
- Early CPR to buy time;
- Early defibrillation to restart the heart;
- Rapid access to advanced resuscitation;
- Prompt, high quality post resuscitation care;
- Transport to the nearest appropriate hospital;

- Co-ordinated rehabilitation services.

In addition to the Chain of Survival, the OHCA plan highlights the positives of promoting life saving skills within schools and confirms all learners in Wales can learn about emergency aid procedures through Personal and Social Education (PSE).

The plan also encourages the use of fire crews and other rescue services to attend and respond to OHCA until the arrival of ambulance services. This has been shown to improve response times and patient outcomes

As part of the on-going implementation the plan, further work will be undertaken to map out organisations that provide CPR training within communities across Wales. This will help ensure that people Wales are not only given every opportunity to survive a cardiac arrest, but they also have access to CPR skills and resources such as defibrillators enabling them to save lives.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I would like to thank all of those who have worked together and been involved in the development of this plan.

“A patient’s chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest decreases by an estimated 10% with every passing minute. Between April 2016 and March 2017, the Welsh Ambulance Service responded to 5,800 OHCA of which 2,832 resulted in a resuscitation attempt.

“Survival rates are currently low but there is the potential for many more lives to be saved if cardiopulmonary resuscitation and early defibrillation were undertaken more often. This is why this plan is so important.

“We never know when we might come across situations where action needs to be taken to help save a family member, friend, colleague, neighbour or stranger. Providing skills and knowledge would enable people to start the chain of survival as early as possible and give individuals who suffer an OHCA the best chance of survival.

“We need to ensure these opportunities are available to all people, in all communities across Wales.”

Joanne Oliver, Health Services Engagement Lead for BHF Cymru said:

“We are delighted at the commitment demonstrated by the Welsh Government to those who suffer from and those at risk of a cardiac arrest”.

“Cardiac arrest is a serious medical emergency, where the heart stops pumping blood around the body and unless treated immediately,

it leads to death within minutes. The overall UK survival rate for those suffering a cardiac arrest out of hospital is currently less than 1 in 10”.

“There is still a lot of work that remains to be done and investment in research into the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular conditions must remain a priority in Wales. We look forward to continuing our work together with the Welsh Government to implement this plan and measure its outcomes.”

Dr Brendan Lloyd, Executive Director of Medical and Clinical Services for the Welsh Ambulance Service, said:

“Every minute counts when someone goes into cardiac arrest, and we believe this plan represents an important step forward in improving out of hospital cardiac arrest survival rates in Wales.

“Our new clinical response model, work with partner agencies and our dedicated volunteer network of Community First Responders are aimed at providing the earliest possible intervention for patients with life-threatening conditions, including those in cardiac arrest.

“We are committed to improving clinical outcomes for patients across the country and are delighted that the plan will allow us build on this by carrying out further research and innovation and collecting standardised data to measure the quality of care being provided.

“We will also continue to promote the key links in the chain of the survival such as early CPR and defibrillation within our communities.”