

#DRYMESTER

HELPING PARENTS-TO-BE GO ALCOHOL FREE



IMPACT OF

#DRYMESTER

May 2019 to December 2024

#DRYMESTER is a campaign to raise awareness of the harm associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy amongst the public, targeted cohorts, and the health and social care workforce.

This report contains an overview of the activity and impact delivered by Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership for the #DRYMESTER campaign.



THE CHALLENGE:

THERE IS INCREASING RECOGNITION THAT FASD IS A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE IN THE UK, **WHERE PREVALENCE OF PRENATAL ALCOHOL EXPOSURE IS ESTIMATED AT 41%.¹**

Prenatal exposure is caused by alcohol crossing the placenta into the fetus' bloodstream, reaching the maternal blood alcohol level. As a teratogen, alcohol can cause all types of physical malformation, learning and behavioural challenges. Often this goes undiagnosed or is misdiagnosed as autism, ADHD or, as children with FASD are often in care, attachment disorders.

A joint study across 11 European countries,² found that the UK had the highest proportion of women who drank alcohol when they knew they were pregnant. A UK-based study,³ confirmed that the prevalence of alcohol use in early pregnancy was 29.5%, with the highest percentages reported in the North West of England.

Conflicting professional advice over the years has led to mixed messages, with many believing it's safe to drink one or two units of alcohol a week, with no harmful effects to a developing baby. From research undertaken in 2009, it was clear that British women felt the messages surrounding drinking alcohol during pregnancy, were confusing.⁴ This confusion, lack of awareness and uncertainty about the right advice was even prevalent amongst midwives, adding to misunderstanding and misinformation.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES:

- Increase awareness of the Chief Medical Officers (CMO) guidance: If you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.
- Increase awareness of the risk of Alcohol Exposed Pregnancies (AEPs) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Encourage parents-to-be to go alcohol free during pregnancy

1. Popova et al. 2017

2. Norwegian Institute of Public Health 2017

3. University of Stirling 2016

4. Sayal et al. 2009

OVER 5 YEARS, THE GREATER MANCHESTER CAMPAIGN:

- Has developed materials and resources with input from People with Lived Experience
- Has been seen digitally over **11.9M** times
- Had nearly **1M** visits to the website with each user spending an average of **1 MINUTE 37 SECONDS** per page page with 75% female visitors and 63% 25-44 year olds. The average time on-page for websites is 53 seconds
- Printed and distributed resources to help health and care workforces to understand CMO guidance and share with parents-to-be, including:

- **12,600** booklets
- **5,950** badges
- **3,650** posters
- **2,300** pens
- **2,000** fobs
- **27** roller banners



Over 280 sign ups on the website, evidencing direct engagement and providing a range of reasons for supporting the campaign:

"I want to understand and promote this, and to give my child a healthy start."

Parent-to-be

"I want to spread the word about FASD."

Friend

"I'm a foster carer lobbying my local commissioner to launch Drymester in my area."

Friend

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND ATTITUDINAL SHIFTS FROM INITIAL PHASE:

The first phase of the campaign was delivered across a 10 week period from May to July 2019 in Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside & Glossop. An independent research agency evaluated the campaign through pre- and post-campaign face-to-face interviews involving 1,304 people (639 people pre-campaign and 640 post-campaign) from across the four localities where activities were focused, to understand shifts in attitudes and understanding. The findings are listed below.

- Post-campaign there was a 3% increase in people stating that no amount of alcohol was acceptable during pregnancy – that's 19 survey participants who had changed in their opinion
- 8 participants took direct preventative action as a result of the campaign (either stopping drinking during pregnancy or cutting down drinking as they were trying to conceive)
- 4 in 5 people pregnant women reported decreasing their drinking behaviour post the campaign compared to one in 10 in the general population
- Those who saw the campaign reported being far more open to the role of friends and family in advising on alcohol and pregnancy than those who hadn't seen it
- Prompted awareness of many health harms was significantly higher post campaign and even higher for those who saw the campaign, with 4 in 5 associating FASD with drinking alcohol in pregnancy

The results of independent research confirmed that we had **SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED OUR THREE OBJECTIVES** – building awareness of the CMOs guidance and of FASD, and encouraging parents-to-be to go alcohol free when pregnant.

SPREADING THE WORD ACROSS THE UK:

The campaign has been successfully commissioned by numerous stakeholders outside of Greater Manchester, including:

CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE
CHESTERFIELD
CWM TAF MORGANNWG
UHB
ESSEX

HERTFORDSHIRE
SHEFFIELD
STAFFORDSHIRE
STOKE-ON-TRENT
SUFFOLK

The #DRYMESTER campaign has given stakeholders globally the tools to raise awareness of the CMO's guidance and support parents-to-be go alcohol free. Social media and website engagement is often received from FASD or alcohol awareness related stakeholders in United States, Canada, Spain, Estonia and Australia.



AN INFLUENTIAL STUDY:

On January 29th 2020, the National Institute of Health Research, in collaboration with the Medical Research Council and researchers from Bristol University, published the most comprehensive review to date on the effects of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, citing #DRYMESTER as the safest approach.

VIEW ONLINE



MEDIA COVERAGE:

This promoted a flurry of media PR with #DRYMESTER featuring in regional, national and international press – including The Mail Online, The Independent, The Times and ITV National News.



Maternity high impact area: Reducing the incidence of harms caused by alcohol in pregnancy



Maternity high impact area 4: Reducing the incidence of harms caused by alcohol in pregnancy

Case Study 1: *Drymester* – www.drymester.org.uk

"As a specialist midwife working as part of the wider team in the GM Alcohol Exposed Pregnancy project I have been really impressed with the creativity of the whole #DRYMESTER campaign. However, it's when working in my day-to-day role as a clinical midwife that I have really appreciated the benefit of the #DRYMESTER website.

"There have been several occasions when women have attended an appointment in early pregnancy and disclosed alcohol use and the #DRYMESTER website has been an invaluable tool to support discussions around risks and CMO advice. For most aspects of pregnancy lifestyle advice there are standard patient information leaflets which can be quite uninspiring for women to read and I feel the message therefore can be quite limited in impact.

"It is fantastic to be able to show women the website whilst having the discussions. It is user friendly and appealing and provides evidence-based information in a dynamic way. Other midwives have commented that they feel the website helps to reinforce the guidance without them needing to 'dictate to women'.

"I have recently had a woman who has returned for a later appointment and told me she shared the website with a newly pregnant friend before she even saw a healthcare professional and they both have made some of the mocktail recipes!"

Jen Michaels, Specialist Midwife, Royal Oldham Hospital

Appropriate transfer of care from maternity to health visiting services can ensure that a woman continues to be supported in the postnatal period which may present new challenges and questions around use of alcohol. For example, many women who drink alcohol have concerns around the impact on the baby when they are breast feeding. Expressing milk before drinking or delaying breast feeding for 2 to 3 hours after every drink consumed will help **prevent the baby being exposed to alcohol**.⁽²⁵⁾ The risk of **Sudden Infant Death** is increased with **bed sharing** and parents must be advised not to share a bed if they have drunk any alcohol.⁽²⁶⁾ Sleeping on the sofa with a baby is highly risky in any event.

Figure 4 shows how alcohol use may increase in both mothers and fathers after the birth of a baby.⁽²⁷⁾ This reinforces the need for awareness of the possibility of alcohol misuse by health and social care professionals who meet families with young children. Support from a partner may also be needed, and women supported by a partner have been more likely to continue with abstinence.⁽²⁸⁾

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GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT:

A Public Health England Report – Maternity high impact area: Reducing the incidence of harms caused by alcohol in pregnancy, published in January 2021, features #DRYMESTER as its main good-practice case study.

The programme has also been recommended as an example of good practice in the Department of Health and Social Care's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Health Needs Assessment.

The campaign has been supported by MP Bill Esterson, who has highlighted the importance of supporting #DRYMESTER and it being an area of good practice. It has also been referenced twice by Jo Churchill, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health 2019-21, when questioned on the Government approach to AEP and FASD.

NHS Greater Manchester AEP programme lead participated in the development of the NICE Quality Standard, published in March 2022, designed to improve the diagnosis and assessment of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

PODCASTS:

#DRYMESTER commissioned a podcast '**FASD: A guide for Speech & Language Therapists**', featuring expert guests, Speech & Language Therapists Rachel Jackson and Morag Burns and Sandy Butcher, the Chief Executive of the National Organisation for FASD. The podcast aimed to equip and empower Speech & Language Therapists (a new audience), both learning and qualified, with the knowledge and tools to identify and address FASD in children. Supported by a digital campaign, we generated many key new followers including the CEO of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, and 432 downloads.

#DRYMESTER also supported the promotion of a podcast developed by GP Excellence, featuring Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Raja Mukherjee – Neurodevelopmental Disorders in Children (focus on FASD) which has had 17,000 downloads since the release in September 2021.



SOME OF THE NEW SLT FOLLOWERS AND ENGAGEMENTS

STEVE JAMIESON

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CEO

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

ALEX HARPER

@Alex_Harper19

Head of Profession for Speech and Language Therapy at Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS

SALLY MORGAN

@Sallymorganslt

Senior Lecturer in Speech and Language Therapy University of London

DENISE KOLLEE

@dkollee

Chief Speech Language Pathologist – Halton Catholic District School Board, Ontario

CATHERINE HUMPHREYS

@cathumSLT

Senior Speech and Language Therapist, Cleft Care Team, Ireland

KATHRYN BELLSHAW

@KathrynBellshaw

Speech and Language, AHP Lead, Midlands Partnership University NHS FT

RCSLT POLICY

@RCSLTPolicy

Policy & Public Affairs team, RCSLT

PIPPA COTTERILL

@CotterillPippa

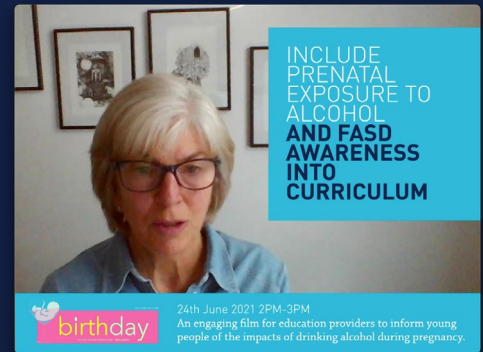
Head of Wales Office, RCSLT Wales

BIRTHDAY:

The programme commissioned an interactive performance and educational workshop raising awareness among young people of the impact of drinking alcohol in pregnancy, delivered by Oldham Theatre Workshop (OTW).

Over 5,000 people saw the Birthday production and 93% of survey respondents felt what they had learned during the performance/workshop would inform their future choices.

Birthday has been recommended by Carolyn Blackburn, Researcher in Education, as an opportunity for teachers, teaching assistants and schools to include prenatal exposure to alcohol and FASD awareness into curriculum.



TRAINING:

Prior to the campaign, AEP/FASD training was not readily available to professionals in Greater Manchester. To equip health and social care staff with the correct knowledge and skills to raise awareness of the harms of alcohol consumption in pregnancy and FASD, a comprehensive training package was required.

A bespoke, CPD accredited training session has been delivered by Red Balloon Training providing 20 face to face sessions, 32 virtual sessions and 300 e-licenses. We've trained over 1,000 professionals across GM including community and hospital paediatricians in relation to FASD diagnosis. Speech and Language therapists on skills required to work with a child with FASD and delivered FASD awareness to health and social care staff, police, probation, voluntary sector organisations, staff working in early years settings, school-based staff, families and carers. Attendees of the course praised the course content and delivery.



HOPEFUL INTERESTING USEFUL
WONDERFUL **INFORMATIVE**
VALUABLE INSIGHTFUL ENGAGING
RELEVANT CLEAR WELL PREPARED
UNDERSTANDING WOW! BRILLIANT
FASCINATING INVESTED ENLIGHTENING

“Great training. It has increased my awareness especially in relation to how common the condition is.”

“This was brilliant training – delivered without a silly amount of acronyms or clinical language so accessible to all. Has been so helpful for me to think about children I have encountered in school. I trained last year in low intensity interventions and there was no mention of FASD and considering what I have learned today this should really have been included.”

CO-PRODUCTION:

To ensure the campaign was meeting the needs of parents, families and carers affected by FASD, People with Lived Experience (PWLE) have been an integral part of the development.

Parents involved were positive about their involvement, believing their knowledge and experience had been drawn upon and they suggested that the programme had helped raise awareness of FASD.



AWARDS:

The campaign, which included social media advertising, influencer marketing through radio, Google and YouTube advertising to drive traffic to a campaign specific website, won Best Digital Campaign at the MPA marketing Awards, 2021 and received a special commendation in the Marketing Society Brave Awards 2020, in the Not for Profit Marketing category.

Making lived experience of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) count in Greater Manchester

Authors: Susan McGrail, Gayle Wells – FASD Greater Manchester, Rachael Nielsen and Róisín Reynolds – NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care



The GM lived experience voice

In Greater Manchester (GM), FASDGM was founded to support people affected by FASD through peer support and social media hubs. The group recognised a lack of input from People with Lived Experience (PWLE) in policy development and representation of FASD. Key stakeholders recognised the need to amplify the voice of PWLE through effective co-production, with a shared vision prioritising the experiences of families affected by FASD in policy decisions, service design, and review. The partnership is committed to evolving through mutual respect and open communication to ensure positive outcomes based on the lived experience in the region.

Impacts of the network

Service design and delivery

- Supporting the design and procurement of new services
- Working alongside GM system leads to consider early years support and school readiness, through an FASD lens
- Involved in the launch of, and contributing to, evaluation of AEP programme
- Contributing to content for #DRYMESTER, a campaign to raise awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, the England Chief Medical Officers' guidance and the impact of FASD
- Reviewing and contributing to the script for 'Birthday' educational school play

The GM Alcohol Exposed Pregnancy (AEP) programme have worked in partnership with the FASD Network since the programme's inception. The insights shared by PWLE have shaped the design and delivery of the programme. The network members are valued critical friends providing representation and challenge that has improved the quality and impact of the AEP Programme. An example being the award-winning #DRYMESTER campaign. We will continue to work together to achieve our shared goal to improve access to diagnosis and support for people affected by FASD in GM. **##**

Rachael Nielsen, Alcohol Exposed Pregnancies Project Manager, Population Health



FASD IN THE UK: BUILDING ON 20 YEARS OF PROGRESS

Working with FASD Salford and National FASD, the partnership delivered a one-day conference with 174 attendees, **"FASD in the UK: Building on 20 years of progress"** which featured current research, policy and practice in FASD, as well as highlighting the importance of co-production and learning from lived experience. Many discussions were had with attendees from other regions who had commended the campaign, and were interested in commissioning it in their areas.



FASD: **NOT COMMISSIONED**

On FASD Awareness Day 2024, National FASD released ‘Not Commissioned: Systemic confusion in NHS services for alcohol, pregnancy and FASD’, a biennial progress report on NICE Quality Standard 204 based on Freedom of Information requests.

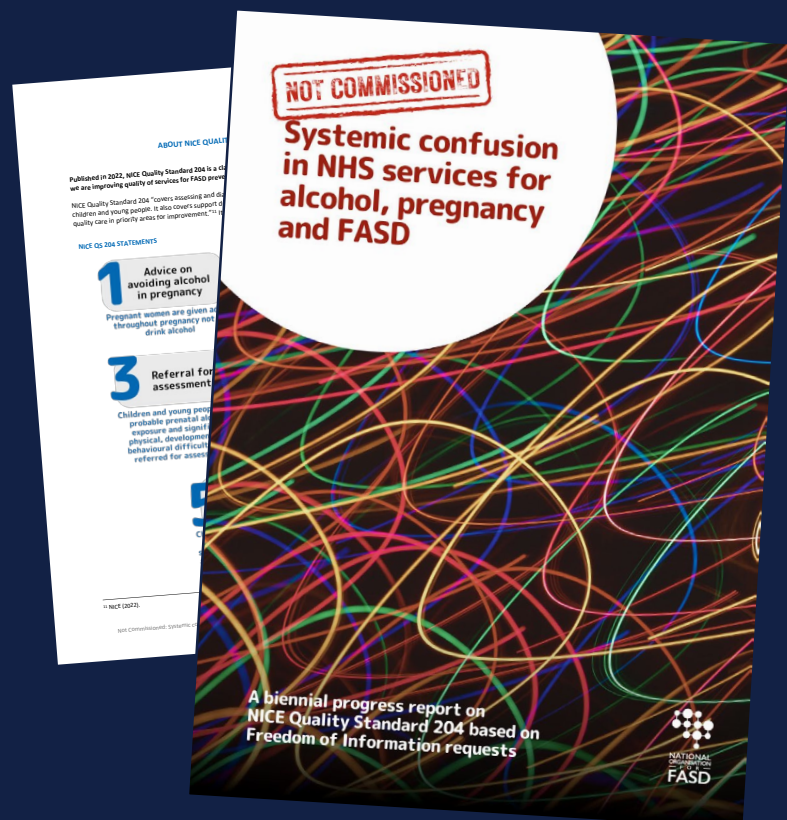
The report shows that the majority of NHS Integrated Care Boards and NHS Trusts are missing a golden opportunity to protect baby’s brains and futures with their slow, non-strategic and uncoordinated responses to the 2022 NICE Quality Standard 204 on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

But the board in Greater Manchester was praised for taking action to try to implement NICE guidelines. A specific spotlight is shone on Greater Manchester on page 60 of the report where it says:

“Greater Manchester stands out as an ICB that is prioritising NICE Quality Standard 204. Greater Manchester ICB are proactively ensuring that multi-sector services are aware of the kinds of improvements called for in the Quality Standard and they are embedding this work in key planning documents. Full implementation of the standard is a specific priority within the NHS Greater Manchester (GM) Joint Forward Plan”.

It goes on to add on page 80, *“Clear national communication about FASD has been lacking. The DRYMESTER campaign and work in Greater Manchester is an example of how this can be done effectively.”*

According to Róisín Reynolds, Strategic Lead-Population Health for NHS Greater Manchester, *“NHS Greater Manchester takes its responsibilities, for the prevention of harm from alcohol-exposed pregnancies and the need for those with FASD to be diagnosed and supported, seriously. Since 2018, we have been a national exemplar in FASD prevention, awareness raising through our award-winning DRYMESTER campaign, diagnosis, treatment and support. We believe that this work matters and are encouraging other areas to take a similar approach. At the heart of our work are the people who have lived experience of this condition, and we are pleased to continue our relationship with National FASD to develop our Greater Manchester FASD Network, bringing people together and providing resources and support across our local communities.”*



NEXT STEPS:

IN THE 24/25 FINANCIAL YEAR WE ARE:



Recording and launching a new Occupational Therapist Podcast



Attending the FASD conference at the University of Salford, 10th June 2025



Creating new assets for Red Balloon training

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE



Share the Impact Report with stakeholders



Further the reach and awareness of DRYMESTER to new regions



To be the lead alcohol exposed pregnancy behavioural change programme





“FASD is something that has been around for a long time and is unlikely to disappear. Finding ways to prevent and manage this has therefore become essential. The project in Greater Manchester was one of the first in England to really embrace this and find solutions to some of these questions. Such a lot of good work came out of this, that will change the longer-term approach going forward. Having said that, we cannot see this as a ‘job done’. There is much more to do and whilst it is, from a cup half full approach, a job well done, it has to be the start of the process and not the end.”

RAJA MUKHERJEE,

Consultant Psychiatrist, National Clinical Lead for FASD.

“The Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (GM ICP)’s Alcohol Exposed Pregnancy (AEP) Programme has been vast, having a very positive and rapid influence on change for the AEP and FASD agenda in local places across Greater Manchester. Parental engagement has been an integral part of the work undertaken and the journey so far.

The impacts have extended beyond the original scope of the programme with one of the biggest changes being how the work has extended beyond the boundaries of the health sector, into education. This has accelerated the involvement throughout localities, and we are now hopeful of a Greater Manchester-wide response to AEP that brings together the collective energies of the health and social care and education sectors (SEND) as well as local authorities. This larger scale, more co-ordinated engagement is welcomed and has happened much more quickly than we as parents and carers have previously been able to influence.

It is the benefits to families which are most important to us and it is pleasing families are starting to report more awareness and understanding of FASD amongst professionals, so the impact has already started to filter down to some families.”

SUSAN MCGRAIL,

FASD Greater Manchester