

# An 'alcohol health champions' intervention to reduce alcohol harm in local communities: a mixed-methods evaluation of a natural experiment

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## Plain language summary

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# Plain language summary

## What was the question?

Alcohol consumption puts an individual's health and social relationships at risk of harm. The more a person drinks, the more harmful it is. The harmful effects can place a burden on emergency services and hospitals. We wanted to find out whether community members can make a difference by taking action to address alcohol harm in their local area.

## What did we do?

Local councils in Greater Manchester developed a project called Communities in Charge of Alcohol, where volunteers in targeted local areas were trained to become 'alcohol health champions'. Alcohol health champions gave alcohol-related brief advice to people to help them drink less. They had a say about when, where and how alcohol is sold by reporting issues to their local council. We compared numbers of alcohol-related hospital admissions, accident and emergency attendances, ambulance call-outs and reports of crime and antisocial behaviour between areas that had alcohol health champions with other similar areas in England that did not. We calculated how much it costs to run and whether Communities in Charge of Alcohol could save society money.

## What did we find?

Not as many volunteers came forward to become an alcohol health champion as hoped for. Those who did give alcohol-related brief advice to people. They preferred not to report issues about alcohol sales to their local council, either because it was too complicated or because they did not want to be called a 'grass'. We did not find levels of alcohol harm changed in the Communities in Charge of Alcohol areas. Because of this, we could not demonstrate that Communities in Charge of Alcohol could save society money.

## What does this mean?

Getting involved in alcohol licensing decisions needs to be made easier for communities, with more anonymity, through the support of professionals. More work needs to be done to understand whether giving brief advice can reduce alcohol harm in whole communities.

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