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Deputy Bernard J. Durkan,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

10 th May 2023

PQ Ref 19120/23 - 19121/23 - Ref No: 19122/23

To ask the Minister for Health his Department's plans for providing the public with access to information about alcohol; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

To ask the Minister for Health the number of people visiting askaboutalcohol.ie in search of information regarding alcohol in each year since 2018 to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

To ask the Minister for Health if information regarding alcohol is now deemed less important given the discontinuation of the 'Ask About Alcohol' website; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Durkan,

Harmful alcohol use is a significant public health problem in Ireland. Alcohol is responsible for a considerable burden of ill-health, such as liver disease, cancer and heart disease. The harm caused by alcohol use extends far beyond those individuals drinking in a harmful way, to those around them, in their families and communities, and is contributing to serious problems in many areas of life in Ireland, including child welfare, road safety, and crime.

The HSE launched the Askaboutalcohol.ie website and campaign in 2017. The site and campaign are part of a greater programme of work developed by the HSE Health and Wellbeing Alcohol Programme as a health service response to alcohol harm. The goal is to help improve people's knowledge and understanding of alcohol, our own drinking, and how it can affect our health and mental wellbeing.

The website is a comprehensive resource, providing evidence-based and easy to read information from clinical experts, with advice and easy-to-use tools and a self-assessment calculator.

It works in tandem with public health legislation and regulatory changes on alcohol labelling, availability and pricing and ensures there is a source of trusted, evidence-based public information and health advice about alcohol in Ireland.

To promote the web content to the public a supporting digital marketing campaign has been running since 2017, firstly on radio and digital media and currently on social media and paid search advertising.

There are also a wide range of information materials and posters available to download from the HSE's website, along with education modules for senior and junior cycles.

The Askaboutalcohol.ie site has been part of the wider HSE.ie website since 2019. Our research into public attitudes and preferences on accessing health information shows that including websites like this one, and others such as quit.ie, within the wider HSE.ie website is best practice. It allows the visitor or user the reassurance of accessing health advice from the chosen trusted source of health information for the public, and additional benefits in that they can easily access other relevant public health information within the hse.ie site.

The askaboutalcohol.ie site has seen a healthy growth in both visits overall, and in people using the online tools, since 2017, and that growth increased further when it was included within hse.ie

Source; Google Analytics	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 Q1
Unique visitors	296,747	644,735	477,188	734,665	898,909	135,936
Sessions	352,683	739,184	553,625	831,434	1,012,841	154,969
Pageviews	579,651	2,137,494	2,156,340	1,836,993	2,570,993	352,434
Self Assessment Tool completions	7,475	19,160	63,330	28,100*	58,072	6,424
Drinks Calculator completions	17,403	43,868	16,400	12,438	15,155	3,562

*Data capture issue. Real number likely to be higher

Providing information and tools to support the public and reduce harmful alcohol use in Ireland remains a priority, as captured in the HSE Corporate Plan 2021 – 2024.

The Alcohol Programme Implementation Group are currently exploring expanding the digital service offering in line with international best practice and evidence, to further support the public with information and tools that help them to make informed choices about their alcohol intake.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aleisha Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Dr Aleisha Clarke
Mental Health and Wellbeing & Alcohol Programme
Strategy and Research
HSE