



# GP facilitated-access to digital alcohol interventions for patients: Using SMS text messages

# Using SMS to promote patient health

- Alcohol misuse is a major contributor to ill-health, including for conditions such as hypertension, cancers and diabetes.
- Short, targeted, evidence based interventions, such as Identification\* and Brief Advice (IBA) can reduce alcohol-related harm.
- Offering these digitally is low cost, high reach and allows anonymity.

Facilitate access to alcohol IBA using SMS texts coming from General Practices.

- Harness technology, drive traffic to tool, increase engagement in alcohol interventions
- Gain better understanding of level of alcohol issues
- Reduce alcohol-related harm



*\* For this project we used the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) which is an evidence based tool produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Some alcohol IBA approaches may use other questionnaires.*

# The approach

- iPlato used by GP practices to send SMS texts to patients
- Campaign text message sent to all patients 18+ who have consented to text messages, with link to alcohol IBA website

*GP Practice Health Campaign. Healthier Drinking Choices? Take a confidential and anonymous alcohol health check e-drink-check. [Kingston.gov.uk/k1c1](http://Kingston.gov.uk/k1c1)*

- Link takes patient to online E-Drink-Check site where patient complete the alcohol IBA
  - Identification (using AUDIT)
  - Brief advice (AUDIT score, normative feedback, tailored advice)
  - Signposting to local services, option of sign-up and completion of drink diary



*\* For our project we used iPlato and E-Drink-Check (Alcohol Health Network) however different providers may be commissioned in different localities*

# Online alcohol IBA

drinkKchecker

E-DRINK-CHECK  
ANONYMOUS, MEASURABLE, CONFIDENTIAL

LOGIN



Think you know your dr...nk?

Kingston's e-drink-check helps you find out how much alcohol you drink, what this means for your health and how to get help if you need it.



I live in Kingston

Work out how much you're drinking and whether this is affecting your health.

Start



I am a student in Kingston

Information and advice for students on alcohol and staying safe while at University or College.

Start



Healthcare Professionals' Guide

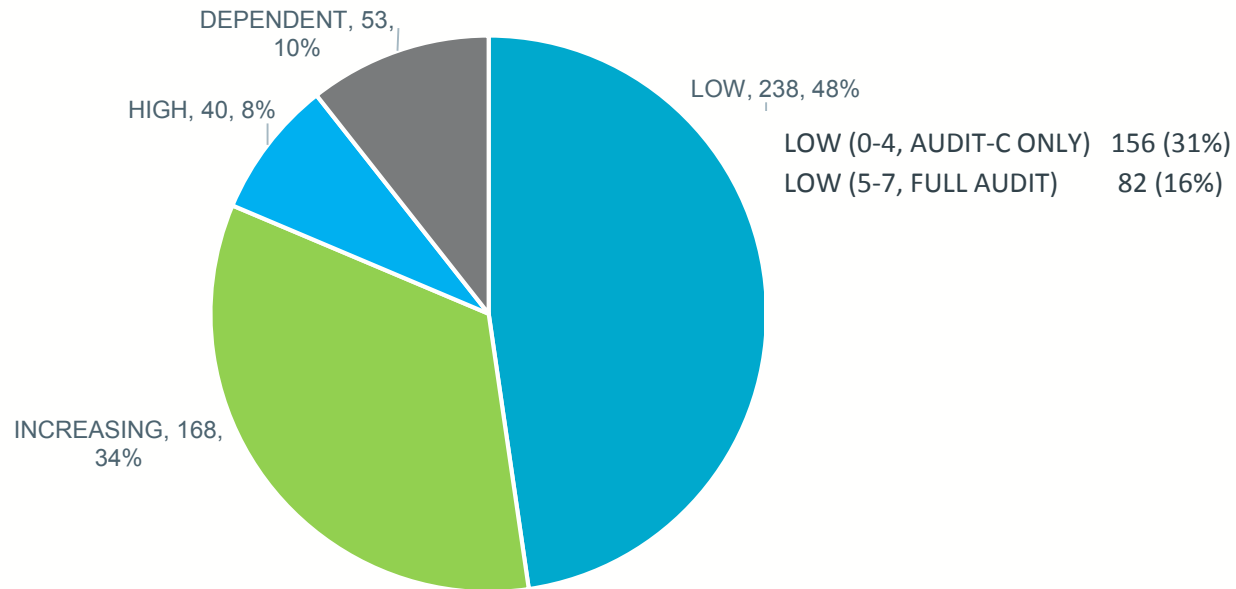
Resources, guidance and further links for Kingston GPs, health, social care and substance misuse professionals.

more

- Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test
  - AUDIT-C = first 3 questions
  - Full AUDIT = AUDIT-C + 7 questions
- Scored and given risk category
  - Lower risk (0-7)
  - Increasing risk (8-15)
  - High risk (16-19)
  - Possibly dependent (20+)
- Brief advice offered to increase awareness & motivate to reduce consumption
- Can sign up to site, complete drink diary, and can signposted to local support services

# Results of pilot

- 16027 SMS text messages sent, 11650 successfully delivered
- 697 (6%) accessed the IBA tool (e.g. clicked to take the test)
- 508 (4%) completed the AUDIT-C → 353 (70%) scored 5+



- 261 (2.2%) patients identified themselves as drinking at risky levels, and so received the appropriate feedback and advice

# Summary of pilot

Text messages can facilitate access to evidence-based alcohol IBA, and is completed by those who identify as drinking at risky levels

- ❑ Potential to reduce alcohol-related harm, improving health and wellbeing
- ❑ Provides intelligence about overall patterns of alcohol use in your patients
- ❑ Could use this information to target interventions

Further details can be obtained from:

Kate Daley, Darzi Fellow, Health Innovation Network

[katedaley@nhs.net](mailto:katedaley@nhs.net) / [rodwatson@nhs.net](mailto:rodwatson@nhs.net)

The findings of this project are being used to strengthen a NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) grant application to examine the feasibility of a Randomised Control Trial to formally test these approaches. This is in partnership with Middlesex University.

# How to implement in your practice

- Set objectives and identify resources
  - ❑ Administrator time (e.g. approx. 1 hour)
  - ❑ Text message software (e.g. iPlato, Voice Connect, Mjog)
  - ❑ Digital alcohol IBA provider (e.g. Alcohol Health Network, Haga, Club Soda)
    - ❑ Confidential / anonymous, clear information governance
    - ❑ Containing all aspects of IBA to ensure evidence based, and high usability
- Write SMS text message, plan timing and audience
  - ❑ Consider wording and limiting characters (160 characters / text)
  - ❑ Personalisation (e.g. GP Practice Name)
  - ❑ Sent at time when population most likely to respond (e.g. 11am, 8pm)
  - ❑ Send to all adults 18+ who have consented to text messages
- Raise staff awareness, implement procedure to handle patient queries
- Send SMS text message as planned
- Collect results and implement interventions / further initiatives if needed
  - ❑ Minimum of 3 weeks to gather data
  - ❑ Set time aside to review results and plan interventions as needed