



SCOTCH WHISKY
ACTION FUND

MANAGED BY



FAST
FORWARD



@ScotchWhiskySWA

Organisation: **Rowan Alba**
Date of Award: **2020**
Amount Awarded: **£14,539**
Project Name: **Training for pub and off-license staff**



Rowan Alba creates and delivers services to stop homelessness before it happens and get people who have lived on the streets for years, off the streets for life.

Rowan Alba was established in 2005 in recognition of the number of homeless older men in Edinburgh with alcohol dependencies. Their situations meant they frequently fell through gaps in support or were passed from agency to agency, and eventual disengagement from all support provision. Rowan Alba approached a local housing association who agreed to provide a 12 flat property in return for them being responsible for its maintenance. This property provides tenancies to 12 men and in the last 15 years Rowan Alba have given 70 men, with persistent problematic alcohol usage and experience of homelessness, a home for life and the support to sustain it. Their alcohol issues may stem from years of health inequality, trauma, homelessness, family breakdown, mental health issues or time spent in prison. Due to their drinking, relationships with families and friends have broken down and as a result 95% live alone and 70% have no support network.

Training for pub and off-license staff: Building on a pilot phase

Rowan Alba were looking to build upon their pilot work providing training for Edinburgh pub staff on recognising and engaging with older people in the community living in extreme isolation and at high risk of alcohol related harm. Visiting pubs or off-licenses is often the only social activity they have, and staff are viewed as trusted individuals and can therefore be first to know if an individual is heading towards crisis.

Rowan Alba therefore sought to roll out their free training to 95 pub/off-license staff on how to have conversations around alcohol with vulnerable customers, signpost to appropriate services, and identify serious health issues to pub staff across Edinburgh. The aim was to increase the number of older, vulnerable, individuals being supported to access services to help reduce the impact of their harmful drinking by delivering five awareness sessions for pub owners across the city through Pub Watch, and 10-15 tailored training sessions for individual pub and off-license staff.

The grant initially funded a Training Coordinator for 16 hours per week to assist them to deliver flexible, bespoke, training on an outreach basis and to develop and print marketing materials. The grant was also to fund travel, evaluation costs and management support. However, due to the pandemic the budget had to later be revised.

Intended outcomes were isolated older people experiencing, or at risk of, alcohol related harm in the community will have increased:

- opportunities to access community support services
- awareness of health and wellbeing issues resulting from drinking and how to look after themselves
- resilience to cope with self-managing their alcohol use
- social and support service engagement

Staff in pubs/off-licenses in Edinburgh will have increased knowledge and understanding of:

- community support services available and how to refer to them
- impact of alcohol on an older person's health; signs of health problems and when to seek medical help
- how alcohol can affect behaviour and how to respond to challenging behaviour while remaining safe

Case Study:

A staff member from a local pub contacted Rowan Alba looking for help dealing with conversations taking place at closing time with a customer, Tracey, who was talking about committing suicide. The Service Manager provided 1:1 support on how to approach this alongside suicide training and Samaritans leaflets.

Staff in the pub are now supported to re-direct Tracey to other services when she presents in the pub tearful and helpless. They have the number of a mental health crisis team at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital where trained mental health nursing staff answer the phone. These calls have supported Tracey's request to have her medication reviewed by her GP.

Behaviour Training is also helping staff support Tracey to understand and notice when drinking is the cause of her suicidal thoughts and how this differs from actual dips in mental health when she is sober. Tracey has said having someone to talk to in the pub, that she trusts, has helped her recognise that she needs support.

Project Delivery and Lockdown:

When the project started the country was in Tier 4 lockdown restrictions and soon afterwards, in full lockdown. The focus of the project had to therefore shift to off-licences and corner shops which is where vulnerable individuals were now going to buy alcohol instead of pubs.

It was then the decision was made to, instead of employing a new Training Co-ordinator to deliver training sessions to pubs that were now closed and bar staff on furlough, use the salary budget to train four existing Rowan Alba staff with lived experience of alcohol issues to increase their understanding and recognition of alcohol related harm including Alcohol Related Brain Damage. The training ran for five weeks which increased skill sets amongst staff to work on a community level to engage with off-licences and local corner shops who were now seeing an increase in vulnerable people using their services.

Staff then concentrating on building relationships with these businesses and encouraging them to identify, signpost, and refer individuals they were worried about for support. Staff consulted with existing clients to find out which shops and off licences would be receptive to finding out more about how to support vulnerable people. Several existing service users have increased connections with these businesses since the pandemic with proprietors going out of their way to help them, for example, trying to persuade them to accept food items when they go in to buy alcohol.

In addition, they trained ten volunteers in alcohol related harm in a group session over Zoom which was also attended by two Licensing Officers and a representative from Fire Scotland. This session led to an unexpected outcome when the Community Fire Officer was called to a fire involving an older person with alcohol issues at high risk. Our training gave the Fire Officer the confidence to challenge the decisions of other professionals at the scene who were reluctant to refer the individual for support as there was 'no point'. The referral process for this individual to Rowan Alba's services has now started as a result.

Case Study:

Staff received a call about Billy from his local shop after he had a fall there as they had Rowan Alba's leaflets in store. Following discussions with the shop staff they explained Billy was spending up £700 each month for his ongoing purchases of ten cans of lager a day, 20 cigarettes and every other day he bought bacon, bread, and a pot noodle.

A volunteer introduced Billy to the local pub, a place he was willing to go for a chat and supported him to check bank statements and take control of his spending. The £700 was being spent on other individuals who were relying on him to buy the daily alcohol and cigarettes. He now drinks in the pub and gets one meal every day there and the individuals exploiting him no longer call at his house. He drinks a maximum of four pints, plays dominoes and chess, and gets a taxi home. The bar staff here have signed up to the challenging behaviour training delivered by Rowan Alba and have put their posters up in the pub.

Billy's alcohol intake has reduced and eating one meal per day is having a significant impact on his health. Billy did not want a regular volunteer but welcomed someone to play pool with him once a month, so this was arranged with one of the volunteers. This is the start of relationship building which keeps communication open for any change in Billy's needs in the future.

Project Delivery and Lockdown:

Training for pubs/off-licences was tailored to their individual requirements and ranged from full day workshops to 1:1 training over coffee, telephone chats, and group Zoom sessions. Training focused on how alcohol can affect the brain and behaviour and the serious health implications of long-term drinking and identifying when a person is at risk.

They now also deliver crisis prevention training to help staff identify high risk customers quickly and the Service Manager completed CPI Crisis Development Certified Training and is now cascading this to other staff/volunteers.

A series of marketing leaflets and promotional materials were developed to encourage referrals and raise awareness of the service. These helped staff/volunteers begin informal conversations around training and many existing service users helped to hand out leaflets to pubs/off-licences and cafes they visited. Leaflets have also been distributed to police stations in the city centre and Leith.

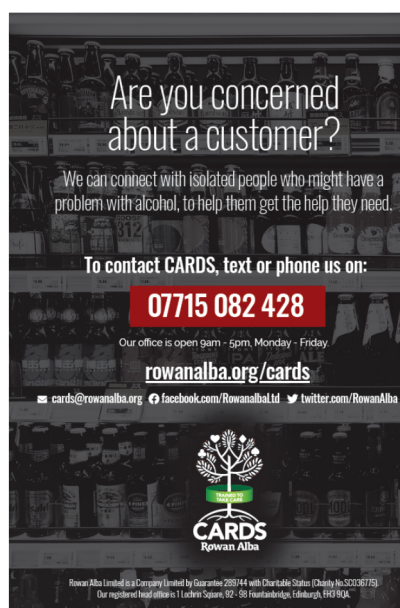
Free training was delivered to managers/staff in twenty-two pubs across Edinburgh. Training was then cascaded to forty-seven bar staff. On average three vulnerable customers per pub were approached, signposted, or directly referred to our service, totalling sixty-six individuals. In addition, three bar staff are now also volunteering with Rowan Alba because of taking part in the training.

Some pubs did not have time/resources to complete training within the timescales of this project due to the impact of Covid on staffing. However, at least five additional pubs are interested in future training. The pubs which open at 6am, with all customers being alcohol dependant, are the next group to receive training. This is offering intervention with some individuals who will likely need to use Rowan Alba and other mainstream services in the future.

Training was delivered to seven off-license owners in Leith, Ferry Road and Tollcross with knowledge cascaded to a further thirty-one staff members. At least one vulnerable individual per shop was approached, signposted, or referred which resulted in twenty-seven enquiry calls to Rowan Alba. Training was mainly informal and focused on advice on how to open conversations about signposting/referral as off-licence staff do not tend to know their customers in the same way as bar staff do.

Training Example:

Training was delivered to bar staff before opening where they mentioned four customers they were worried about, and Rowan Alba provided individual feedback and signposting on each case. They provided a list of signs to identify when medical attention is needed, and staff posted this on the wall behind the till. Bar staff were then supported to set up a corkboard with useful numbers on it and a QR code for community services and the pub is now providing an iPad for customers to use to look for community support. Staff reported that training on dealing with challenging behaviour was useful for both new and existing staff.



Case Study:

Staff from the Dome Bar in Edinburgh City Centre were concerned about a regular older customer whom they considered at risk of alcohol related harm. Since the non-selling of alcohol during Covid19 Tier 4 restrictions he had not been seen. They were concerned he would be drinking alone in his house and putting himself at risk and so contacted us to ask for advice on how to approach the situation.

Rowan Alba provided support on how best to contact the individual through Social Services and what to say to avoid any distress. After this, the customer was so touched by the thought and care the staff showed he began to use the bar regularly again, drinking orange juice. This allowed the bar staff to arrange introductions to Rowan Alba over a Christmas lunch and explain about their befriending service. He now has a volunteer that goes walking up Arthur's Seat with him once a week and as a result says he feels much less isolated and anxious having someone to talk to and getting outdoors.

"The funding has helped us connect with vulnerable people in Edinburgh who are isolated and at risk of harm due to long term alcohol use. Thanks to the grant from SWAF we have been able to support more people to find services to help them by training pub and off-license staff in how to start conversations around health." – Judith Younger, Rowan Alba