**£25M TO HELP OVER-FIFTIES
ENJOY BOOZE WITHOUT THE BLUES**

**A drink in later life can be one of life’s simple pleasures, but too many and the line between a harmless tipple and a more serious problem can become blurred. To help tackle the issue, the Big Lottery Fund is investing £25 million into an alcohol-related harm prevention and awareness programme for the over fifties, in partnership with support charity Addaction.**

**Rethink Good Health** is a UK-wide programme aimed at those aged 50 and over, an age group that can find themselves drinking more for a variety of reasons, such as retirement or an increasing problem of loneliness and isolation, as the recent study from the International Longevity Centre and the charity, Independent Age, showed.

Other findings also make sobering reading. The most recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that alcohol-related deaths are highest among men aged 60 to 64 years (42.6 deaths per 100,000 population) and women aged 55 to 59 years (22.2 deaths per 100,000). The 2010 General Lifestyle Survey revealed that 20 per cent of people aged 50 and over drink every day compared to 3 per cent of 20-24 year olds.

The seven-year Rethink Good Health programme will support a variety of projects, with flagship work taking place in **Glasgow, Sheffield, Devon, South Wales and Northern Ireland.** In the long term, the programme will help inform policy and practice about preventing alcohol-related harm in later life, improve health and wellbeing of people aged 50 and over who are at risk of developing alcohol problems and help build more effective services aimed at alcohol-related issues.

**Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund Chair,** said: “The last thing we want to do is to tell older people they can’t enjoy a relaxing drink with friends and family. With a lot of the current alcohol programmes geared towards younger people, we simply want to make sure that those over 50 are not neglected, are informed about the warning signs around alcohol problems and are able to find help if they need it.

“Addaction will bring their wealth of knowledge and experience into leading Rethink Good Health, along with their partners across the UK, as we aim to reduce alcohol-related harm in older people and help them to live healthier, more active and independent lives.”

**Simon Antrobus, Chief Executive of Addaction**, said: “Problem drinking doesn’t happen in isolation – there are always other factors involved. This is especially true for the over 50s who can end up drinking at harmful levels as they face challenging life transitions such as retirement, the loss of a loved one or loneliness.

“We’ve called our initiative ‘*Drink Wise, Age Well’.* It’s a great opportunity for us to raise awareness of these issues and improve access to information and treatment for the over 50s. Addaction is delighted to deliver this comprehensive programme, supported by the considerable commitment and expertise of our consortium partners.”

**Baroness Sally Greengross, Chief Executive of the International Longevity Centre UK**, said: “There is no doubt that baby boomers are ‘behaving badly’, challenging preconceptions of what it means to be old and engaging in risky behaviours in terms of ‘drink, drugs and sex’.

“While drinking isn’t a problem per se, as a think tank that specialises in healthy ageing, we know that too much alcohol affects older people disproportionately and may have serious consequences for their physical and mental health and general wellbeing. Things can become particularly problematic, for example, when older people are on complex medication regimes and then drink too much. At best this may make their drugs temporarily ineffective and at worst it can lead to emergency hospital admissions.”

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