

NHS Lothian asks questions about alcohol use

As part of a national programme to address Scotland's alcohol use, patients attending A&E departments in Lothian are being asked to complete a simple alcohol self assessment questionnaire.

The move is part of NHS Lothian's roll-out of alcohol screening and brief interventions to its three main hospital sites.

The hospital initiative will encourage patients to fill out a self-assessment form about their alcohol consumption. This information is then shared with the patient's GP so that at their next visit the doctor can discuss alcohol use in relation to their health and wellbeing – particularly where their A&E visit may be linked to alcohol.

By completing the self assessment form patients are encouraged to consider their alcohol intake and to be aware of the recommended unit guidelines. The initiative is also an opportunity for patients to discuss the harm caused by drinking and the benefits of moderation, allowing them to make informed choices about their drinking habits. Patients are offered help and guidance on how to change their drinking behaviour, if necessary.

Eleanor McWhirter, Alcohol Brief Interventions Lead for NHS Lothian said:

“The roll out of alcohol screening to A&E will see many more patients offered an opportunity to discuss their alcohol use with a healthcare professional.

“It is important that people feel comfortable discussing

alcohol consumption with healthcare staff who can support them in making choices about their own drinking habits.

“Any reduction in consumption may bring positive health and lifestyle benefits.”

Alcohol Brief Interventions are currently offered in GP practices and by community midwives for the population of Lothian.

To date, over 22,000 people across Lothian have received an alcohol brief intervention.