

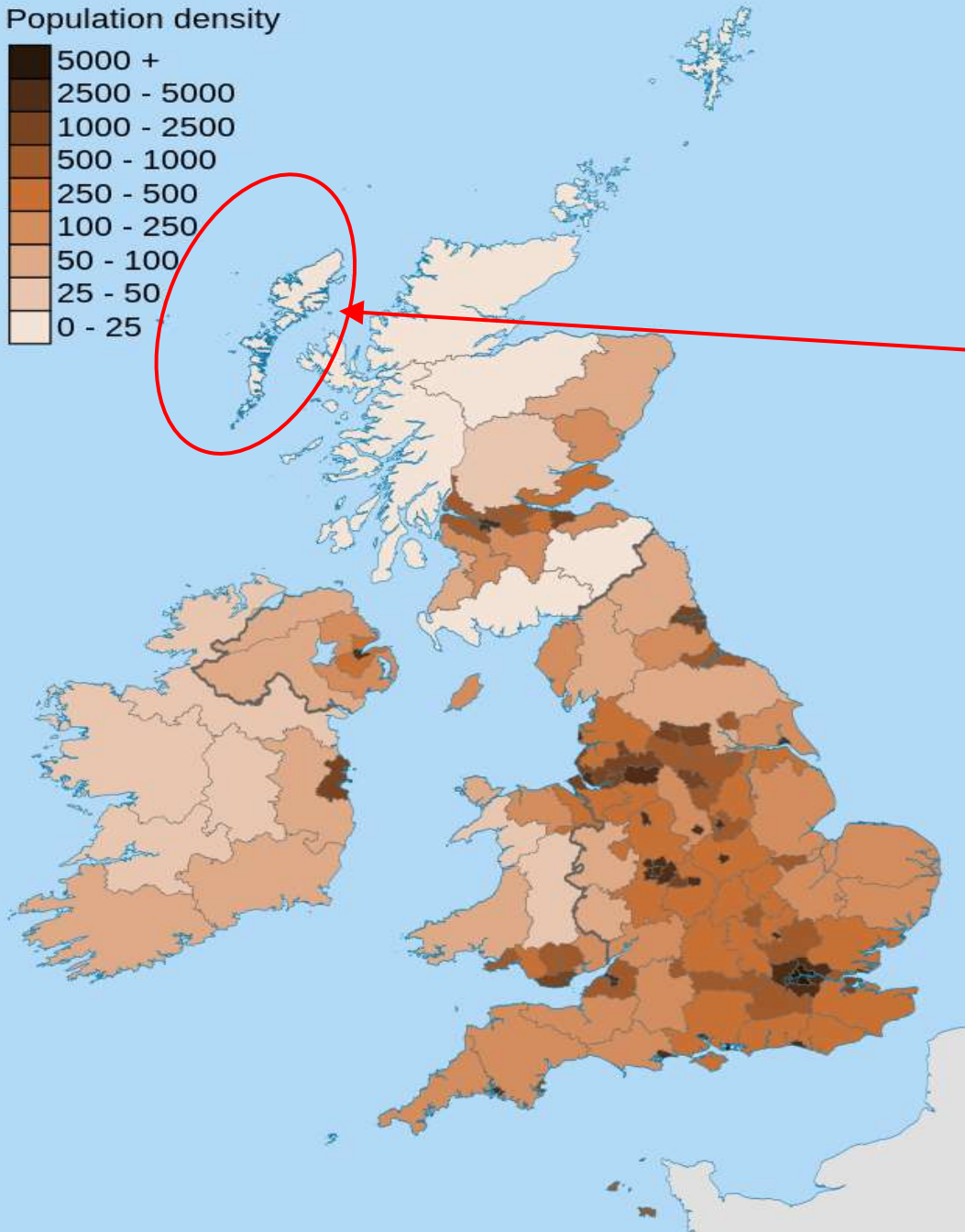
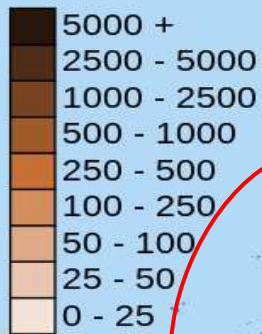
# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders - an issue for islands too

**Dr Maggie Watts, Director of Public Health  
NHS Western Isles**

Interisland Public Health conference  
June 2015



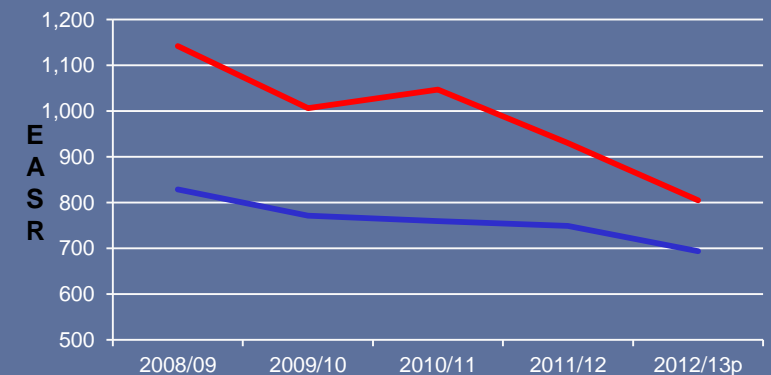
## Population density



## Western Isles

140 miles long  
12 inhabited islands  
(& St Kilda archipelago)  
Population 26,500  
Approx 250 births annually  
High rates of alcohol related hospital  
admissions, unreliable data on  
consumption

Standardised rate of hospital discharges with alcohol related diagnosis, Western Isles and Scotland, 2008/9 to 2012/13



# What is FASD?

- Continuum of **permanent lifelong** birth defects caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy including, but not only, FAS
- Describes the full range of disabilities that may result from prenatal alcohol exposure



# What is FAS?

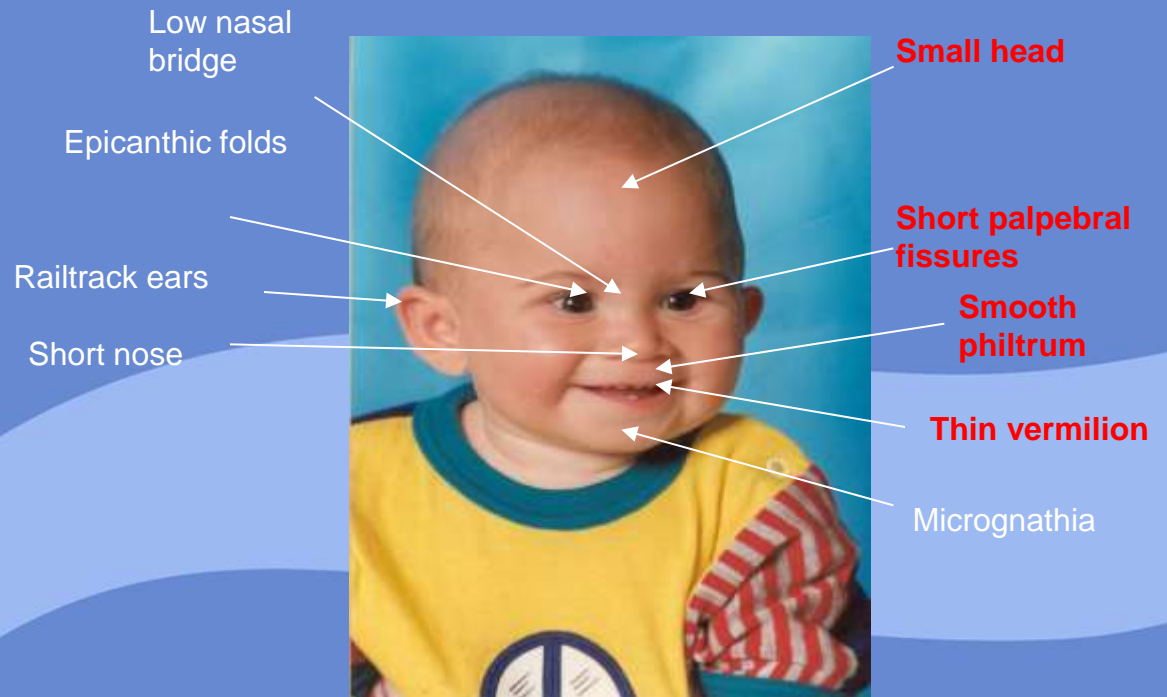
Most recognisable diagnosis under the FASD umbrella

No specific diagnostic tests

Triad of clinical manifestations:

- **facial anomalies**
- **growth retardation**
- **neuro-developmental abnormalities**

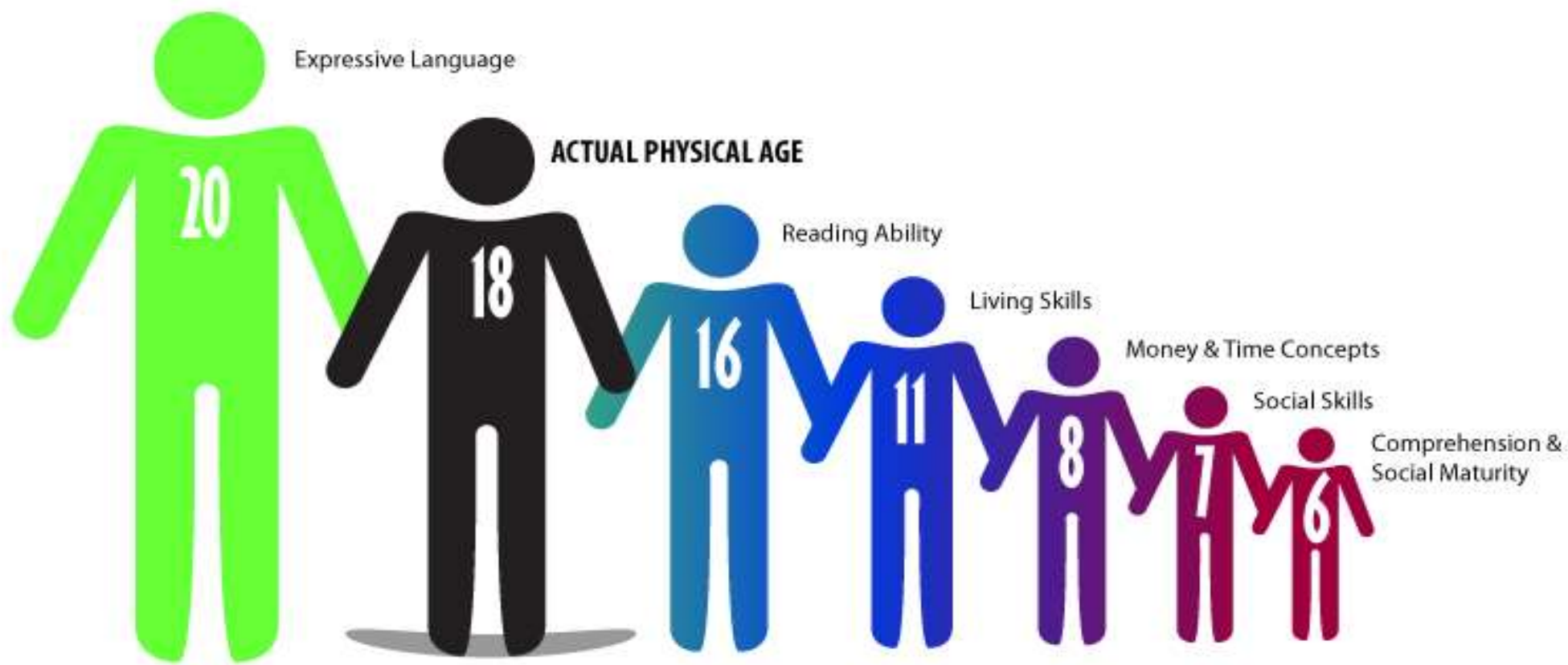
And **robust history of prenatal alcohol**



# How does a child affected by fetal alcohol differ from others?

- Physical differences
  - size, congenital problems
- Behaviours, especially when relating to others
  - aggression
  - mood swings
  - emotional lability
  - attention difficulty
- Executive Function
  - ability to plan
  - complex problem solving
  - planning
  - judgement
  - arithmetical tasks
  - working memory
- Intelligence
  - normal or low IQ
- Communication and speech
  - speaking too fast/too much
  - interrupting
- Motor dysfunction
- Deficient social interactions
  - lack of awareness
- Unusual physiological responses
  - sleep disturbances
- Hyperactivity
- Deficits in verbal learning
- Sensory impairment – vision and hearing problems





## Developmental stages of 18 year old child with FASD



**Adoption & Care Services**

**Psychiatric Services**

**Employment Support**

**Justice & Legal Services**

**Addiction Services**

**Healthcare Services**

**Community Services**

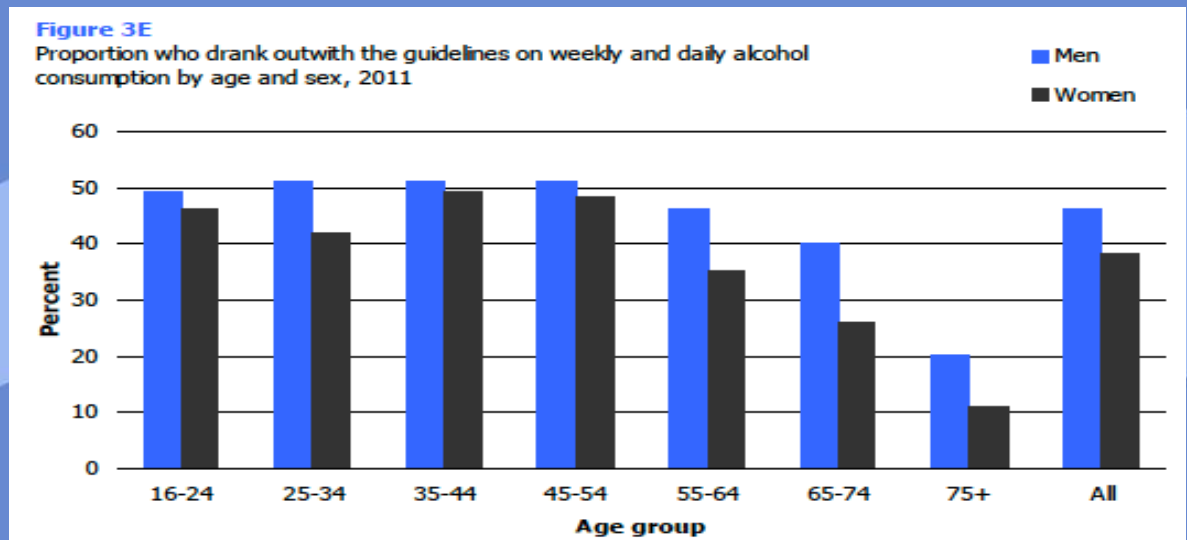
**Income Support**

**Specialist Education Services**

**Child with FASD needs help and support**

# Scotland's drinking is a cause for concern

- Scotland consumes just under 12 litres of pure alcohol per adult annually
- Self-reported use of alcohol accounts for 55% of total sales
- More than 2 in 5 women aged 16-44 years self report drinking above recommended limits







We are not good at telling people clearly & consistently about the harmful effects of alcohol

**Know your limits**  
This bottle contains 20 glasses  
Units of alcohol per 25ml glass and 50cl bottle:

1.1 (per 25ml glass)  
21.5 UK UNIT (per 50cl bottle)

**Government guideline**  
Do not regularly exceed:

Women	2-3 units daily
Men	3-4 units daily

Seek medical advice regarding alcohol and pregnancy  
[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

Random disease warning and calorie content

Pregnancy symbol equal size to recycling and waste



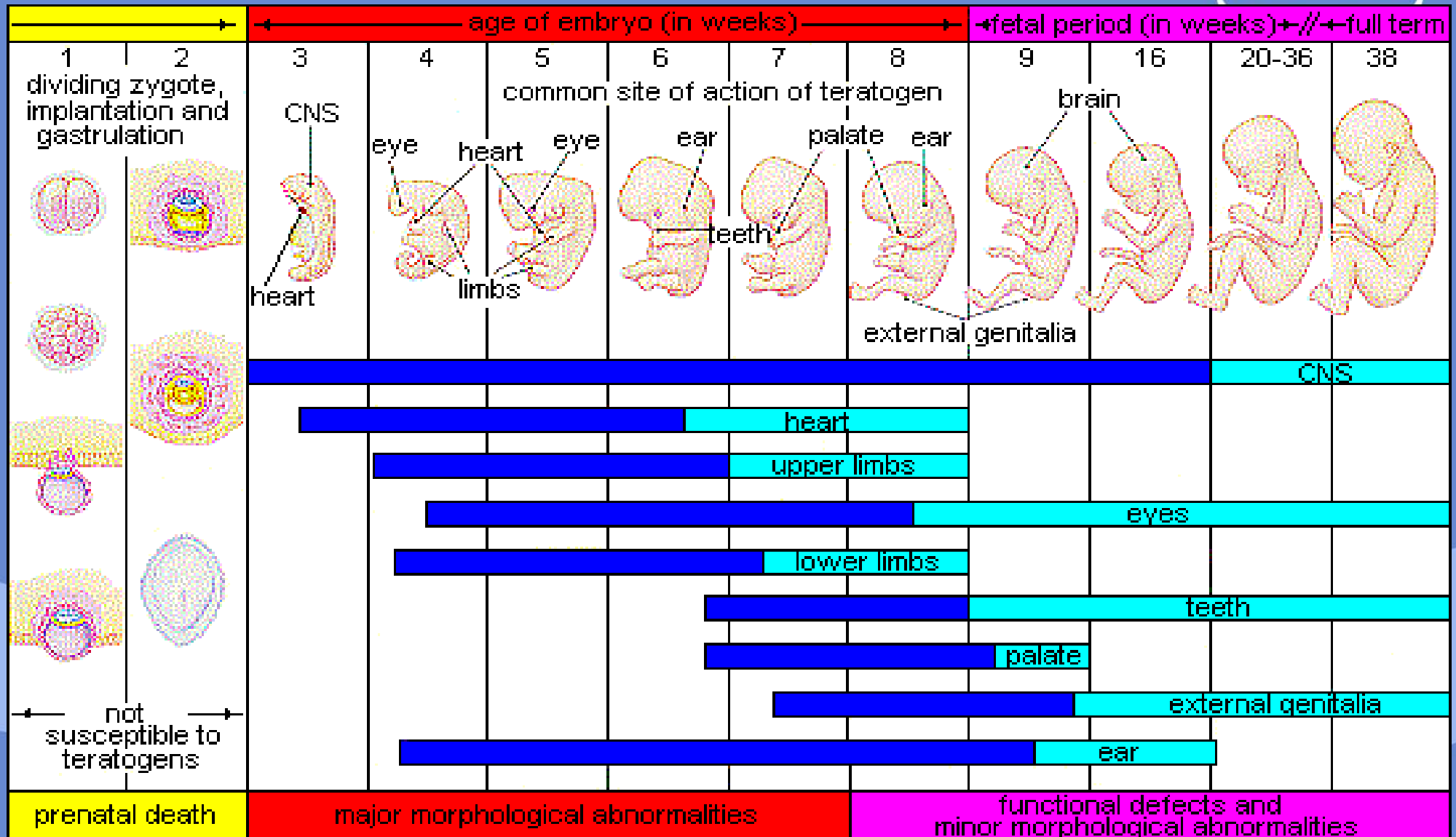
Deferred advice

# Drinking in pregnancy

- Chief Medical Officer for Scotland advice – **AVOID ALCOHOL WHEN PREGNANT OR CONTEMPLATING PREGNANCY.**
- In national surveys, 25-50% of women report consuming some alcohol during pregnancy
- In practice, up to 60% of women report drinking alcohol in the three months before attending for antenatal booking appointment



# ← Alcohol affects development



# Why is FASD an issue to an island community?

- Estimated worldwide prevalence of FAS of 0.5-2.0 per 1,000 live births (Canada, USA etc)
- And 5 - 9 times more with FASD
- So WI 250 births pa – 1-2.5 affected babies, 15-37.5 children under 16 years of age (if our drinking behaviour emulates other areas)

# Island Issues

- Prince Edward Island (Bryanton) - meconium study (2013) 3.1% of pregnancies significantly alcohol exposed
- Réunion (Lamblin) – more than 5% of pregnancies are in women with alcohol dependence
- So island settings are not protective!



**Caledonian MacBrayne**  
Hebridean & Clyde Ferries



# Issues for island communities

- Prevention – awareness and education possible
- Annual campaign for International FASD Awareness Day
- Links to maternity services - LARC
- Innovation – links with sexual health for pregnancy testing kits, increased availability of condoms
- Innovative settings – ferries!





# Island challenges

- Identification
  - Stigma
  - Admission of alcohol use and acceptance
- Diagnostic capacity
- Management



# Training - FASD e-learning resource



Eileanan Siar  
Western Isles

Fetal Alcohol Harm: A Learning Resource

NHS Education for Scotland

Pre-Quiz

Introduction

Understanding

Prevention

Identification

Management

Access full navigation

14:26 10/09/2013

# Useful links



<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/learning-and-cpd/learning-spaces/fasd.aspx>



[www.fasaware.co.uk](http://www.fasaware.co.uk)



[www.nofas-uk.org](http://www.nofas-uk.org)



[www.fasdscotland.com](http://www.fasdscotland.com)



[www.eurobmsn.org](http://www.eurobmsn.org)

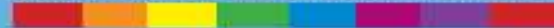
Thanks to my mentors and to the adults and children with FASD who matter so much.



# Awareness raising – FASD Toolkit

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Toolkit

Scottish Government Child and Maternal Health Division



The Scottish  
Government

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ISBN: 978-1-78256-873-1

This document is also available on the Scottish Government website:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

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September 2013



# TOO YOUNG TO DRINK



Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause lifelong harm to the unborn child.

These nine months last a lifetime. Let's keep them alcohol-free.

[www.tooyoungtodrink.org](http://www.tooyoungtodrink.org)

The range of harm to an unborn baby due to drinking during pregnancy is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Alcohol can hurt the baby's brain, heart, eyes, and other organs.

Children with FASD can have a hard time learning, controlling how they act, and making friends.

FASD affects us all, but it is 100% preventable. Together we can prevent FASD!

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# Risk factors for FASD

- Dose of alcohol
- Pattern of exposure - binge vs chronic
- Developmental timing of exposure
- Genetic variation
- Maternal characteristics
- Synergistic reactions with other drugs
- Interaction with nutritional variables
  
- **No alcohol, no risk**

# Signs of progress

“10 years ago, fetal alcohol issues were ignored, misunderstood, misdiagnosed and hardly recognised in the UK”

- 2004 - House of Lords debate ‘Only 128 cases...’
- 2004 - NOFAS-UK DVD for schools (A Child for Life)
- 2007 - Change in alcohol guidance
- 2007 - BMA report on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders – a guide for health professionals
- 2009 - Introduction of alcohol brief interventions for maternity services in Scotland
- 2009 - FAS surveillance programme in Scotland
- 2010 - UK first (and only) FASD specialist clinic
- Present - range of FASD charities with helplines, newsletters, support groups



## NHS Ayrshire & Arran develop an Alcohol Brief Intervention service within the antenatal setting

# hphs

health promoting health service

The Health Promoting Health Service (HPHS) aims to support the development of a health promoting culture and embed effective health improvement practice as part of quality healthcare delivery. This contributes to the delivery of NHSScotland's Healthcare Quality Strategy which puts people at the centre of quality delivery and encourages NHS Boards to share and spread their exemplars of high quality healthcare, pursue their local commitments, take new action to improve quality and consider different ways of working.

To read other HPHS case studies please visit [www.hphs.co.uk](http://www.hphs.co.uk) and for more information on the HPHS support package please contact: [nhs.healthscotland-hphsadmin@nhs.net](mailto:nhs.healthscotland-hphsadmin@nhs.net)

### hphs case study

number  
**7**

**NHS Ayrshire & Arran share an example of the development of a new health improvement service focused on alcohol screening within the antenatal setting.**

**This service aims to raise awareness of the health risks and provide opportunities to signpost patients to specialist services to improve their health outcomes.**

#### The outcomes

Staff and public awareness of the potential harmful effects of alcohol in pregnancy, fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders was raised through the development of a screening tool to support midwives to deliver alcohol brief interventions (ABIs).

Brief interventions are an important way of highlighting harmful behaviours and providing individuals with the tools to make informed choices about how they drink.

All community midwives have been ABI trained and the focus is now on offering ABI training sessions for hospital-based staff. All antenatal staff will be trained to ensure that they are both competent and confident in raising the issue of alcohol with patients.

All pregnant women are now screened for alcohol use, receive an ABI if screening is positive, and are signposted to specialist services should this be required.

Every health care contact is a health improvement opportunity  
[www.hphs.co.uk](http://www.hphs.co.uk)

**NHS**  
Health  
Scotland

# Secondary disabilities

- Mental health concerns
- Disrupted school experience
- Trouble with the law
- Institutionalisation
- Inappropriate sexual behaviours
- Alcohol and drug issues
- Unplanned pregnancies
- Parenting problems
- Problems with housing/homelessness
- Problems with work
- Dependent living
- Premature mortality (suicide, accident)