# Young people in Belfast lead shift towards alcohol-free socialising with growing UK impact



A 23-year-old Belfast man has recently launched a social group designed specifically for young people looking to connect and forge new friendships without the presence of alcohol. This initiative emerged in response to a growing awareness among younger generations that traditional socialising often revolves around drinking, leading to many feeling disconnected or unfulfilled during such gatherings. The personal trainer noted that the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, suggesting a strong desire for inclusive social options that prioritise genuine connections over intoxicants.

This trend towards alcohol-free socialising aligns with broader shifts in societal attitudes, particularly among younger adults. A study by Compass reveals that fewer than 25% of UK workers actively desire alcohol at workplace social events, with more than half citing travel time and family commitments as reasons for avoiding traditional gatherings. This research, which surveyed 30,000 respondents across 21 countries, indicates a significant decline in the appeal of boozy office parties. Instead, younger generations are increasingly demanding inclusive, non-alcoholic, and activity-centric events—preferences that dovetail with a notable increase in the popularity of low-alcohol beverages.

Supporting this evolving landscape, venues across the UK are adapting by offering a variety of non-alcoholic options. Reports indicate that establishments like Convene have experienced a surge in demand for mocktails, reflecting a shift towards earlier, more engaging event formats. This cultural evolution is also mirrored in the realm of competitive socialising. Places like Sixes Social Cricket in London exemplify how socialising can be reimagined through activities that encourage engagement without the backdrop of alcohol. The phenomenon has grown significantly since its inception during the Covid-19 pandemic and now boasts 16 locations, with plans for expansion, showcasing a shift in consumer preferences towards experiences that foster connection and collaboration.

Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the need for safe, alcohol-free spaces, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community. Various initiatives and venues across the UK, such as the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre and Kafe Kweer in Edinburgh, cater to this demographic by providing inclusive environments for social interaction without the pressure to drink. These spaces are instrumental in fostering community engagement and support, allowing individuals to connect freely and authentically.

For those specifically seeking peer support to reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption, a wealth of resources is available. Initiatives such as Sober Socials provide a supportive community for individuals pursuing a sober lifestyle, organising events that offer enjoyable experiences without the involvement of alcohol or drugs. Additionally, online support networks and groups, like those offered by organisations such as Alcohol Change and SMART Recovery, provide valuable guidance and community for individuals navigating their relationship with alcohol.

As the popularity of alcohol-free and socially engaging options continues to rise, it is clear that young people are redefining the norms of social interaction. With a robust community eager for connection without alcohol, initiatives such as the new Belfast group point toward a brighter, more inclusive future for socialising in the UK.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/belfast-personal-trainer-overwhelmed-by-response-to-new-alcohol-free-social-group-i-started-realising-people-arent-enjoying-themselves/a1637064833.html), [[7]](https://sobersocials.co.uk/social-groups)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/belfast-personal-trainer-overwhelmed-by-response-to-new-alcohol-free-social-group-i-started-realising-people-arent-enjoying-themselves/a1637064833.html), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/cbfb52ef-d114-446b-8f56-fa2641e1a4aa)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/d4bbda55-c203-44be-bc32-3b4c481b2eba), [[4]](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/news/lgbtqplus-alcohol-free-spaces)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice-and-support/help-to-stop-drinking-completely/your-complete-guide-to-online-peer-support/), [[6]](https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/what-we-do/drug-and-alcohol-services-for-adults/our-support-groups)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/belfast-personal-trainer-overwhelmed-by-response-to-new-alcohol-free-social-group-i-started-realising-people-arent-enjoying-themselves/a1637064833.html), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/cbfb52ef-d114-446b-8f56-fa2641e1a4aa), [[4]](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/news/lgbtqplus-alcohol-free-spaces)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/belfast-personal-trainer-overwhelmed-by-response-to-new-alcohol-free-social-group-i-started-realising-people-arent-enjoying-themselves/a1637064833.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/cbfb52ef-d114-446b-8f56-fa2641e1a4aa> - A study by Compass indicates that fewer than 25% of UK workers desire alcohol at workplace social events, with just over half attending social events outside work due to travel time and family responsibilities. The survey of 30,000 respondents in 21 countries shows a decline in traditional boozy office parties, as younger generations favour inclusive, non-alcoholic, and activity-based events. Over half of UK students support non-alcoholic drinks at work events and expect future employers to organise engaging, game-based events. This shift correlates with increased low-alcohol beverage sales and higher participation in events starting earlier in the day. Venues like Convene report a significant rise in contracts inclusive of mocktails and non-alcoholic options. Additionally, social venue operators emphasise the importance of shared activities in fostering team culture amid the hybrid work model.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/d4bbda55-c203-44be-bc32-3b4c481b2eba> - Sixes Social Cricket in central London is part of a growing trend in the UK known as competitive socialising, where people engage in activities like cricket, darts, and mini-golf instead of traditional pub outings. Founded during the Covid pandemic, Sixes features virtual cricket bowling and has grown to 16 UK locations, with plans for further expansion. The sector has seen a 40% increase in venues since 2018, supported by changes in consumer behaviour favouring experiences over goods. The rising popularity of such venues is also driven by younger generations drinking less alcohol and companies using these activities for team-building. The trend has created opportunities for filling large vacant premises left by department stores. However, as competition grows, there is an expectation of consolidation within the industry.
4. <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/news/lgbtqplus-alcohol-free-spaces> - The article highlights various alcohol-free spaces catering to the LGBTQ+ community across the UK. These include the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre, Kafe Kweer in Edinburgh, Sappho Events in London, The Queery in Brighton, Category Is Books in Glasgow, Queers Without Beers at Club Soda in London, and The Queer Emporium in Cardiff. Each venue offers a sober environment with diverse activities, fostering inclusivity and community engagement without the pressure to drink.
5. <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice-and-support/help-to-stop-drinking-completely/your-complete-guide-to-online-peer-support/> - This guide provides information on online peer support resources for individuals seeking to reduce or stop drinking. It includes podcasts like BBC's 'Hooked' and 'Bubble Hour', organisations such as Alcohol Change and Club Soda, and support groups like SMART Recovery and Sober Black Girls Club. These resources offer a range of support options, from online meetings and training programmes to virtual communities and podcasts, catering to diverse needs and preferences.
6. <https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/what-we-do/drug-and-alcohol-services-for-adults/our-support-groups> - With You offers free and confidential support groups for individuals experiencing issues with drugs and alcohol. These groups, also known as Mutual Aid Partnership (MAP) groups, provide a space for people to come together and help each other. Meetings are run by experienced staff or volunteers and focus on practical ways to deal with life's challenges, differing from traditional AA or NA meetings.
7. <https://sobersocials.co.uk/social-groups> - Sober Socials is a community that supports individuals seeking a hangover-free lifestyle. They host sober events across the UK, including alcohol-free bars in Brighton and Hoxton, London, and organise sober events like 'House of Happiness'. The community aims to provide a caring environment where friendships are made, and support is given, allowing individuals to enjoy quality nights out without alcohol or drugs.