



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Estimates for Highland

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is the name given to a group of permanent conditions that a person can have as a result of prenatal exposure to alcohol. These conditions include a mixture of physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities, with children likely to experience difficulties in behaviour, learning, relationships and attainment at school and into adult life. FASD is the leading known preventable cause of intellectual disability and birth defects.¹

There is currently no reliable evidence on the incidence of FASD in the UK. A recent report by the British Medical Association highlighted the absence of robust and routine data collection, lack of consistency in diagnostic criteria, difficulty in diagnosis of the range of FASD and under-reporting of alcohol consumed in pregnancy.²

Work undertaken by NHS Health Scotland suggests that FASD has an incidence of a minimum of 1 in every 100 live births, the most conservative estimate from international evidence. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), at the severe end of the spectrum, has an estimated incidence of 1 to 2 cases in every 1,000 live births.³ With approximately 2,200 live births annually in Highland, this equates to potentially 22 cases of FASD and 2 to 4 cases of FAS each year.

The prevalence of FASD among children and young people in Highland under the age of 18 can be estimated by multiplying the average number of FASD births by 17 years. This equals at least 375 people in Highland under the age of 18 who have been adversely affected by prenatal alcohol. The prevalence of children and young people under the age of 18 with FAS is estimated to be at least 38 - 75 children. These are based on the most conservative estimates from international evidence and likely to be an under representation of the number of babies affected each year.

Table 1: Estimates of FASD and FAS for Highland

	FASD	FAS
Incidence rate (live births)	1%	0.01-0.02%
New Cases per year	22	2 - 4
Total aged under 18 years with condition	375	38 - 75

Source(s)

ISD Scotland Maternity and Births by outcome http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Maternity-and-Births/Publications/2016-11-29/mat_bb_table1.xlsx

¹ Scottish Government (2013) Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Toolkit. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/10/3881>

² British Medical Association (2016) Alcohol and Pregnancy: Preventing and managing fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Available at: <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/policy-and-research/public-and-population-health/alcohol/alcohol-and-pregnancy>

³ NHS Education for Scotland (2013) Fetal Alcohol Harm e-learning resource. Available at: <http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/learning-and-cpd/learning-spaces/fasd.aspx>