

'Booze buses' to help deal with alcoholism

[Dec 24 2009](#) By Juliet Eysenck

RISING numbers of people have sought help for alcohol addiction at a Marylebone clinic over the festive period.

Capio Nightingale Hospital, in Lisson Grove, has seen a 15 per cent increase in people accessing alcohol-related treatment in December compared to the previous three months.

The hospital has also noted a 10 per cent rise in the number of women seeking help for alcohol abuse, compared to this time last year.

The clinic is expecting a spike in the New Year as the party season draws to a close.

Raymond Dixon, lead addictions therapist at Capio Nightingale said: "Whilst there are always many contributing factors to alcohol abuse, the current economic crisis has inevitably played a part.

"We've found that many people are delaying seeking help for addictions as they are afraid that in doing so they will be leaving themselves more susceptible to redundancy.

"Unfortunately this tactic is, more often than not, counter-productive and we have certainly found that patients are arriving at the hospital manifesting far more advanced symptoms, which is a huge concern."

The borough of Westminster is also responsible for more alcohol-related 999 calls than anywhere else in London, with booze accounting for more than 12 per cent of all emergency calls in the borough.

Figures released by the London Ambulance Service show that between April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, there were 5,489 calls in Westminster that were down to alcohol – an average of more than 15 calls every day.

In total, alcohol-related calls have fallen slightly since 2007/08.

Ambulance operations manager Phil Powell said: "Westminster is a great place to go out and it's very popular with lots of bars, clubs and pubs in the area.

"But it's important that people don't overdo it when they're out socialising.

"Providing a fast, effective and first-class response to patients is our top priority, so a large proportion of alcohol-related calls is a real concern.

"One in eight emergency calls in the borough is to a patient who is simply drunk, which limits our ability to reach people who really need our help.

"We want people to have a good time over Christmas and the New Year, but we're urging people to think carefully before dialling 999.

"This will help us to ensure that ambulances are available for people with life-threatening emergencies."

To help deal with alcohol-related calls, two 'booze buses' ran on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights during December.

The vehicles can carry up to five patients at once and are managed by a team of three staff, reducing the need for ambulances