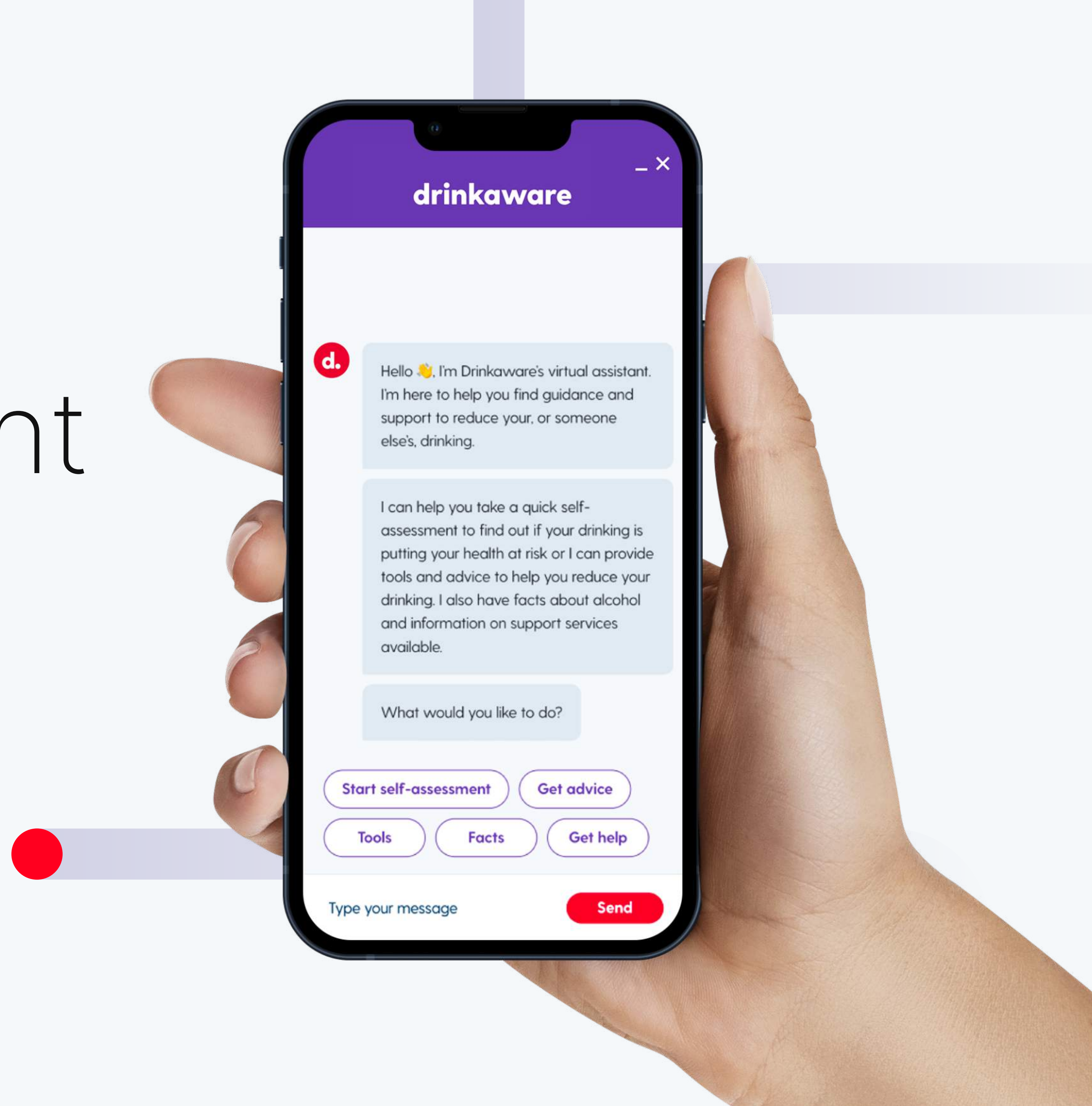


screenmedia 

Drinkaware Virtual Assistant

drinkaware



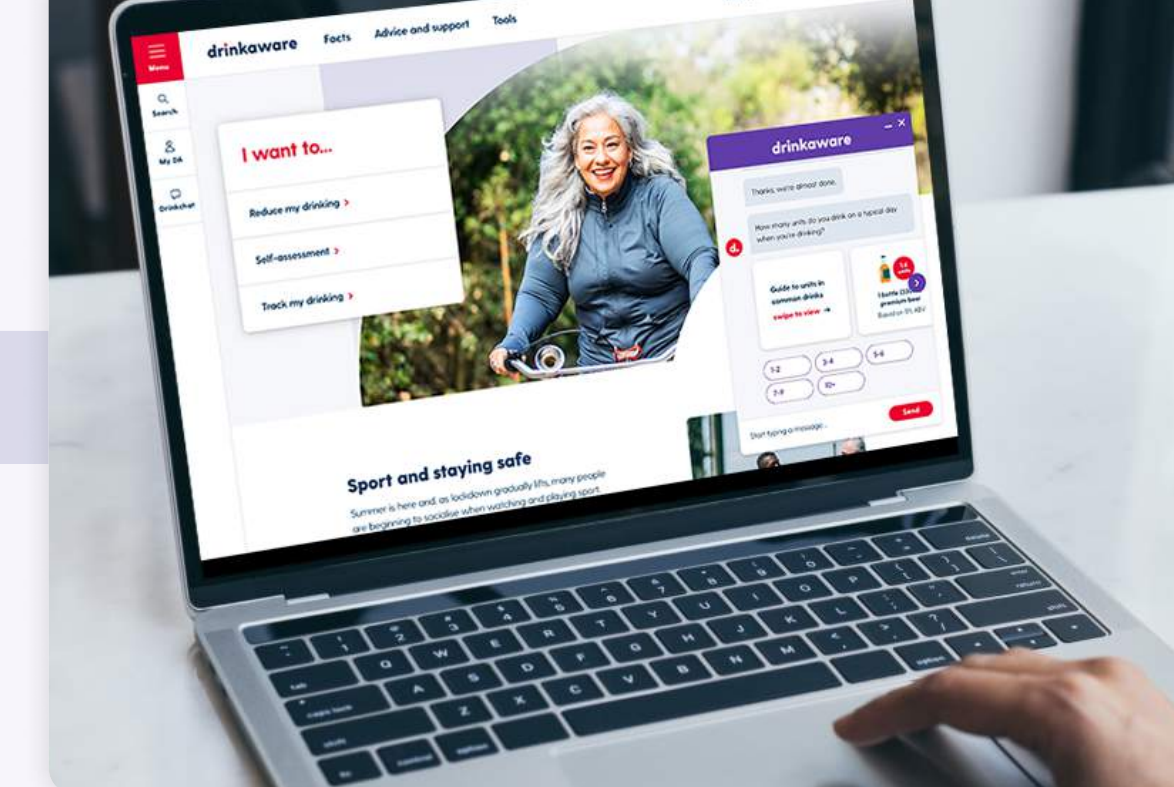


Background and audience

In 2021 Drinkaware and Screenmedia worked together to launch The Drinkaware Virtual Assistant on Drinkaware's flagship website. The project ran alongside a broader programme of work to radically overhaul Drinkaware's digital and data systems, a foundational step as a small charity in establishing good data hygiene practices as a precursor for comprehensive work in AI.

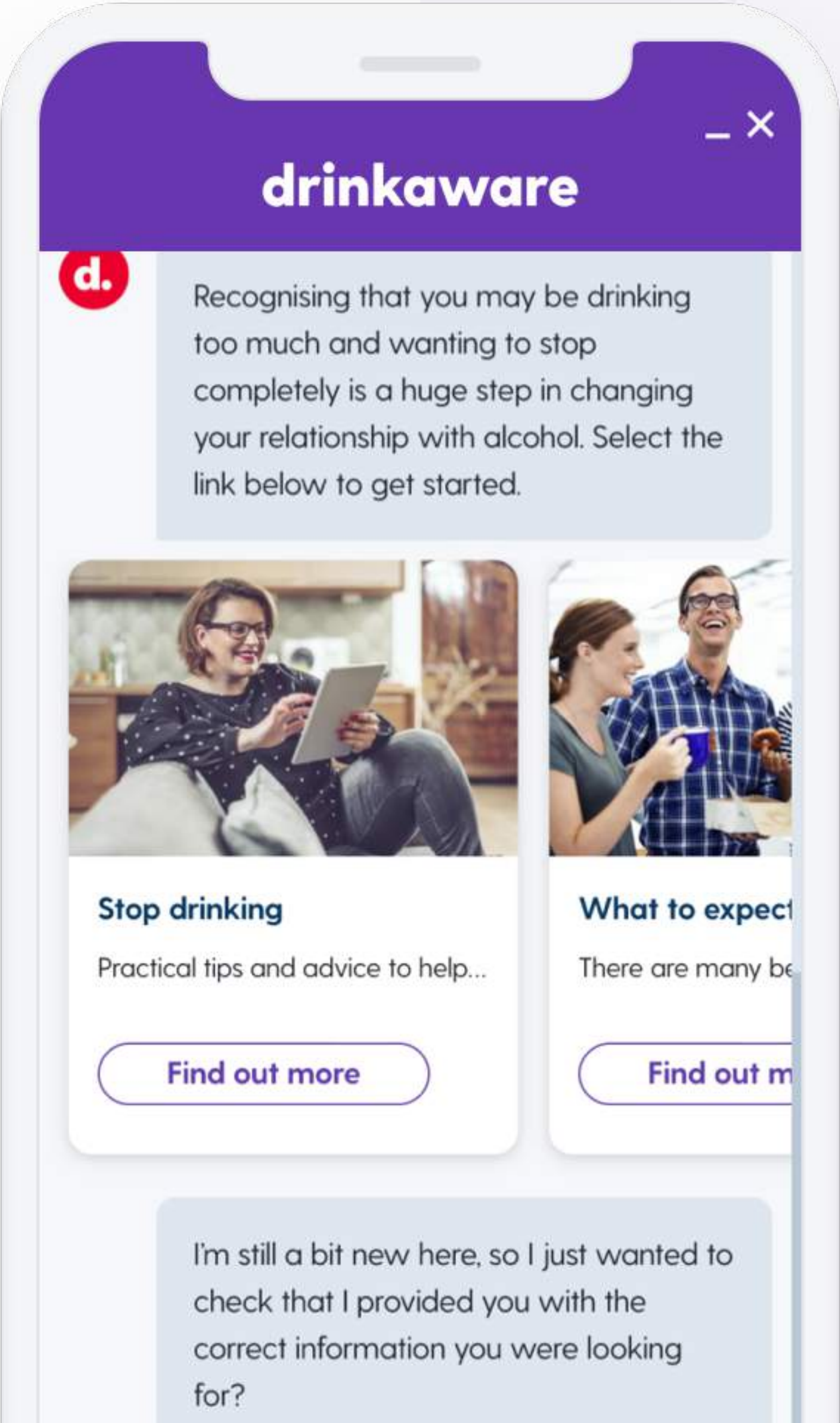
People drinking at risky levels have complex needs; one-size solutions do not fit all. Finding appropriate support can be difficult and with myriad alcohol support services, this can be a bewildering territory to navigate. Drinkaware are engaged in a broad-ranging programme of work to introduce tools and services to support this audience, working with Screenmedia as a key digital partner, and with input and consultation from the UK Government's Behavioural Insights Team to effect behaviour change.

The chatbot was conceived as a proof-of-concept to test the assumption that visitors to the website would respond favourably to tailored, guided assessment of their drinking with effective triage into appropriate support, and that this could be delivered cost-effectively at scale. It was also identified that such a conversational interface solution could be a key step in building a data-driven strategy for Drinkaware to prove and improve the impact of their work.



Background and audience

The chatbot’s key purpose is to deliver information, advice, and guidance to people who want to reduce their harmful drinking. It delivers a self-assessment tool using the internationally-recognised Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) to determine a user’s risk of alcohol dependence. Based on their result, it triages risky drinkers into personalised support; whether that’s fact-based information, digital tools like Drinkaware’s tracking app, or alcohol support and treatment services; in short, end-to-end, personalised IBA (or Identification and Brief Advice) which is considered the ‘gold standard’ in alcohol interventions for reducing alcohol consumption.



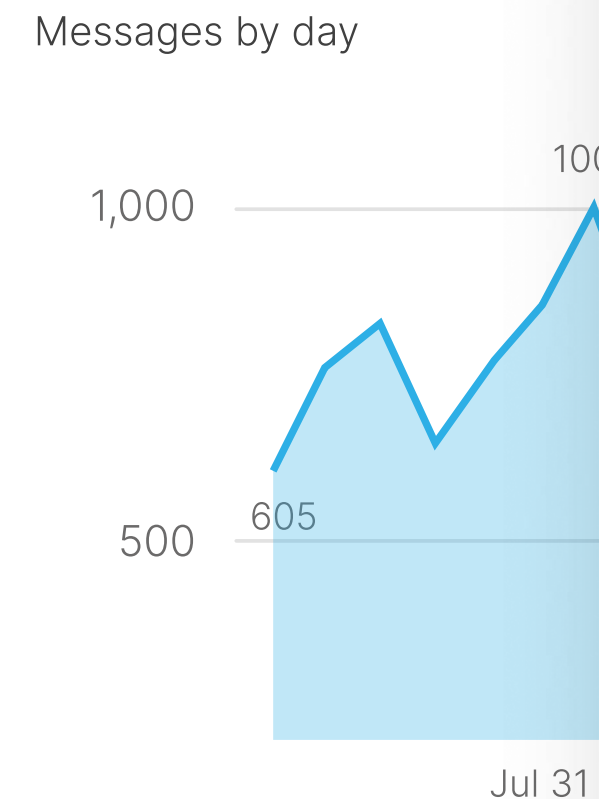
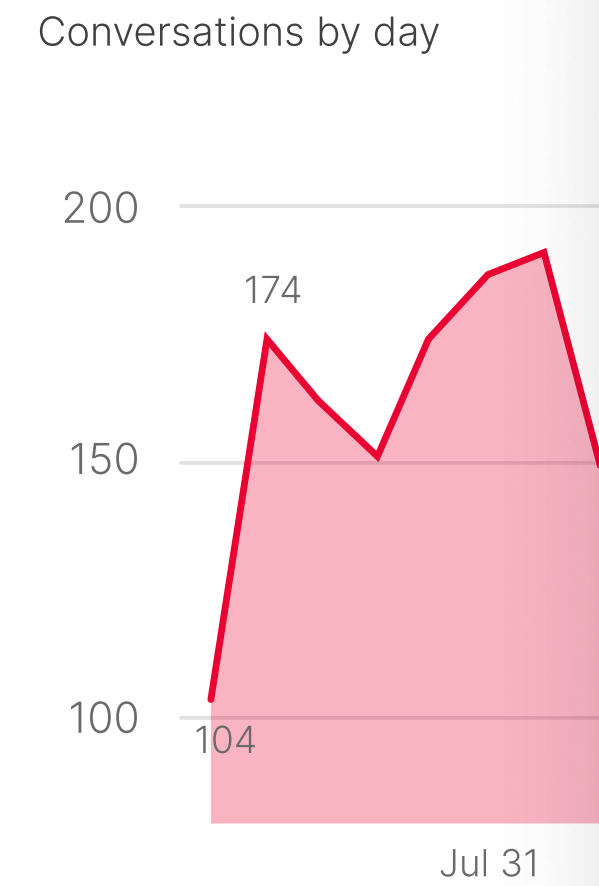
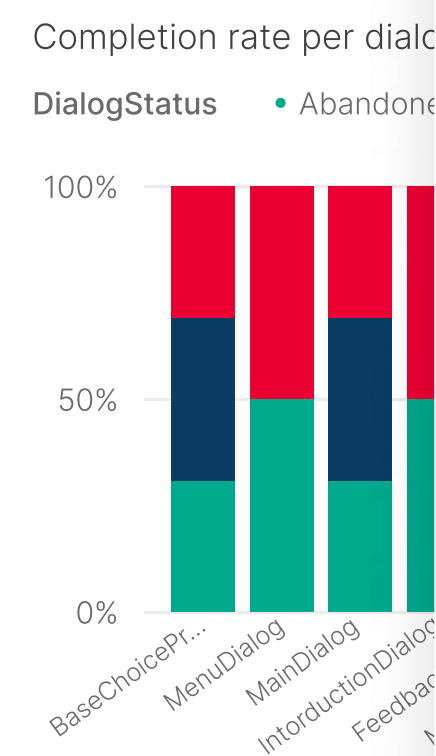
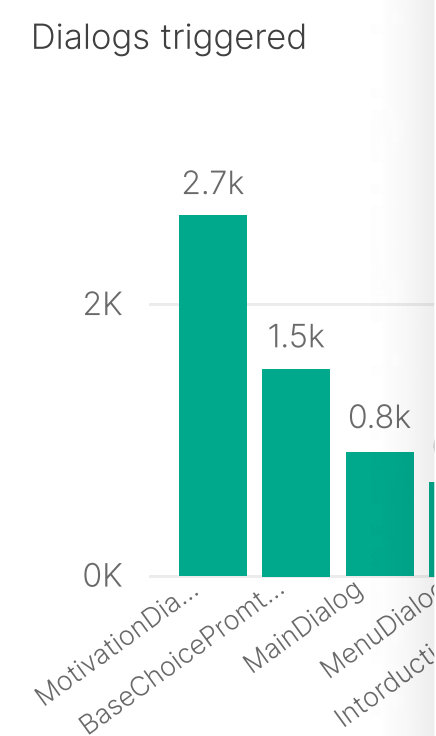
Chatbot Features

- ✓ Self assessment tool
- ✓ Triages risky drinkers
- ✓ End to end personalised IBA

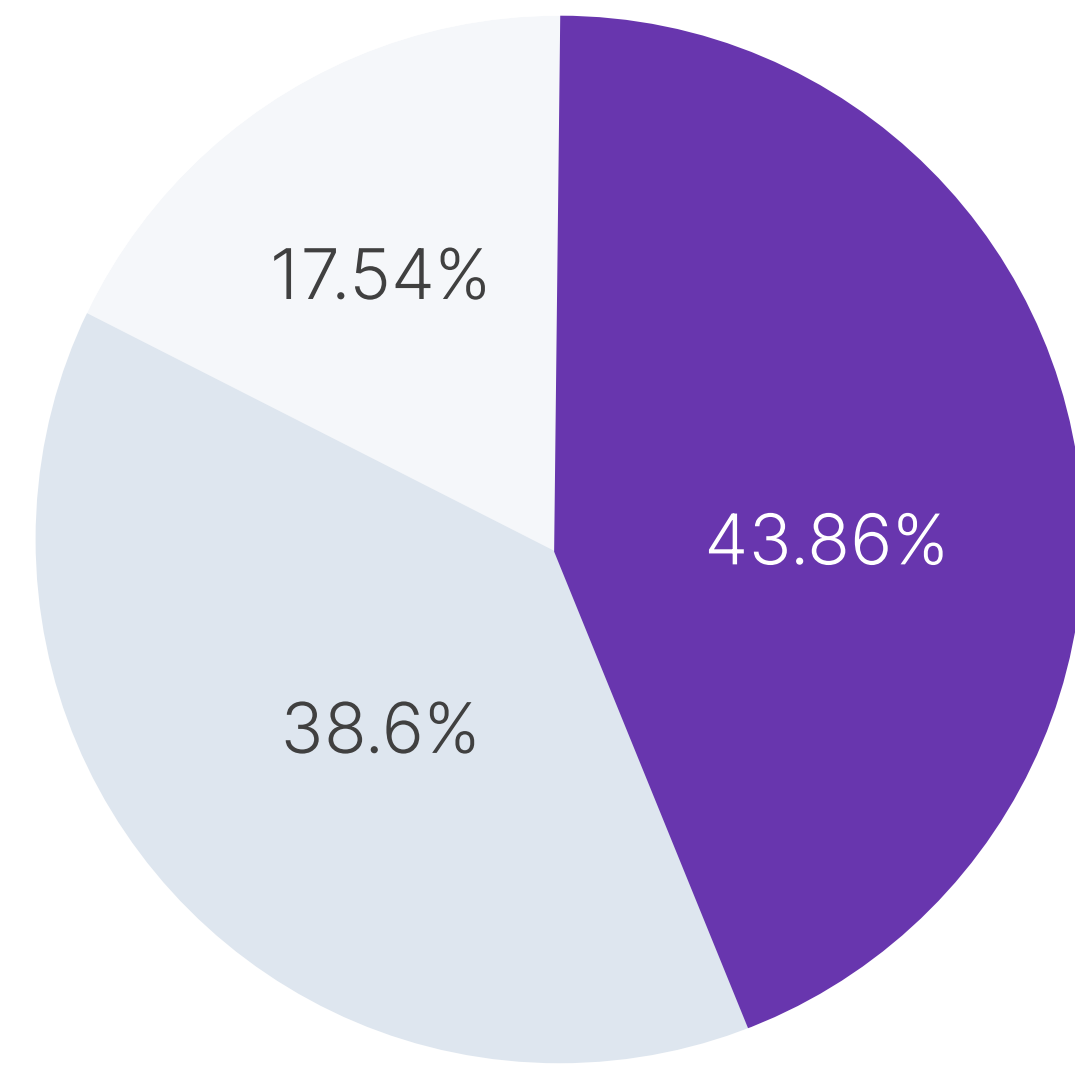
Background and audience

Its secondary objective is to learn, gathering qualitative data and insight at scale to challenge and validate Drinkaware’s business assumptions with data.

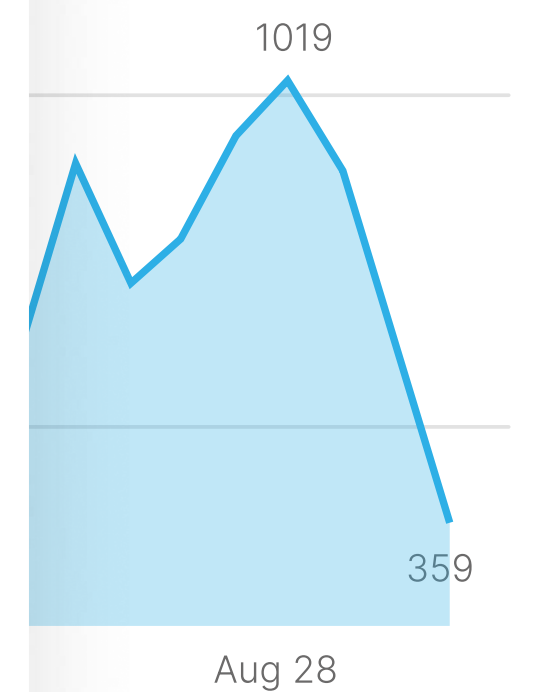
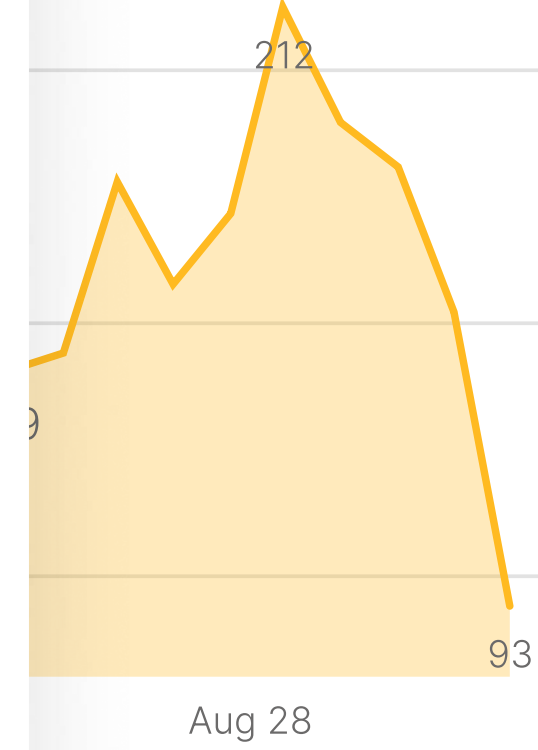
The target users of the chatbot are all people drinking at risky levels (determined by the AUDIT test) who have the propensity to change their drinking. The chatbot also supports people looking to support loved ones with their drinking (23% of the website’s audience).

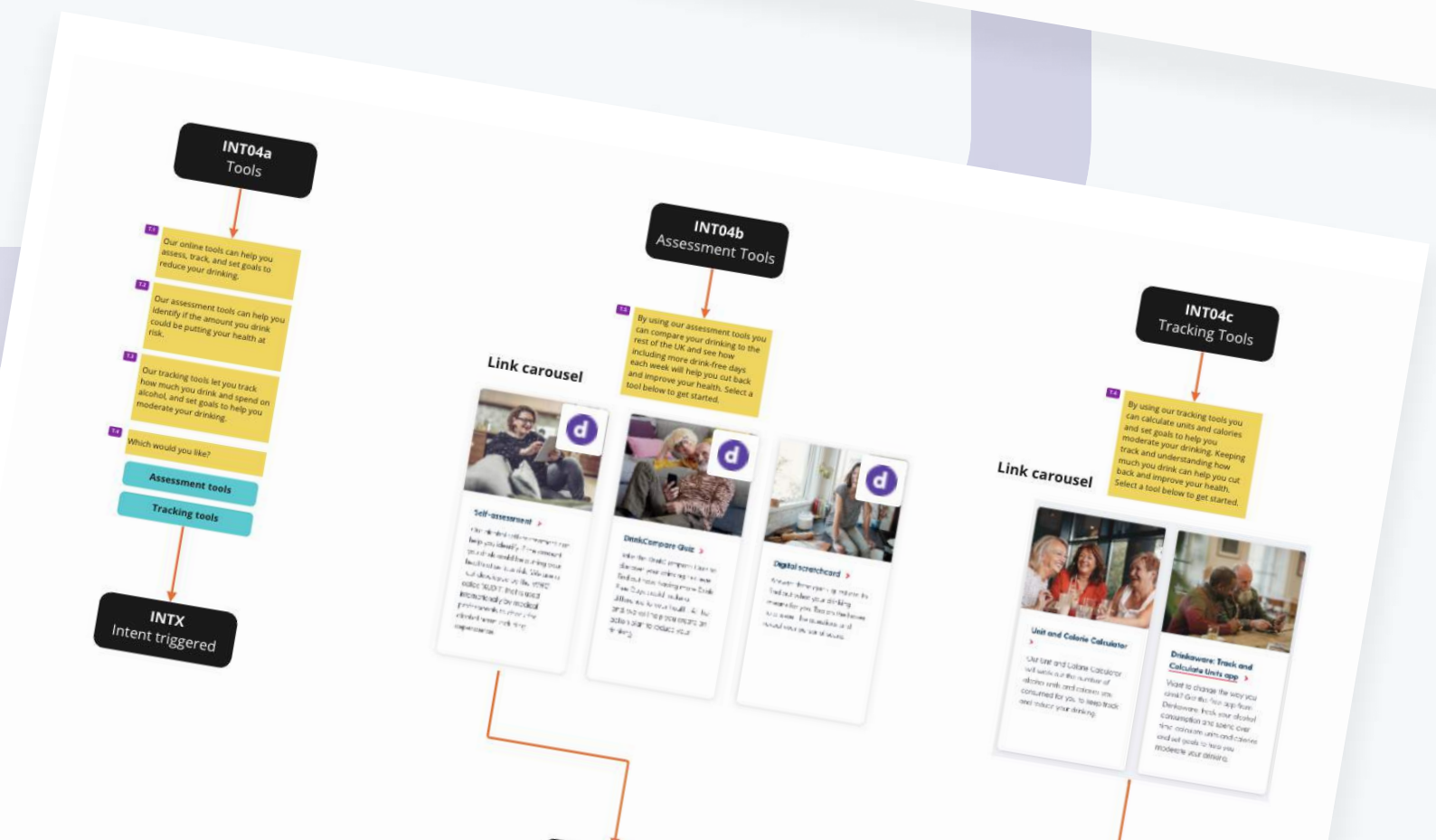
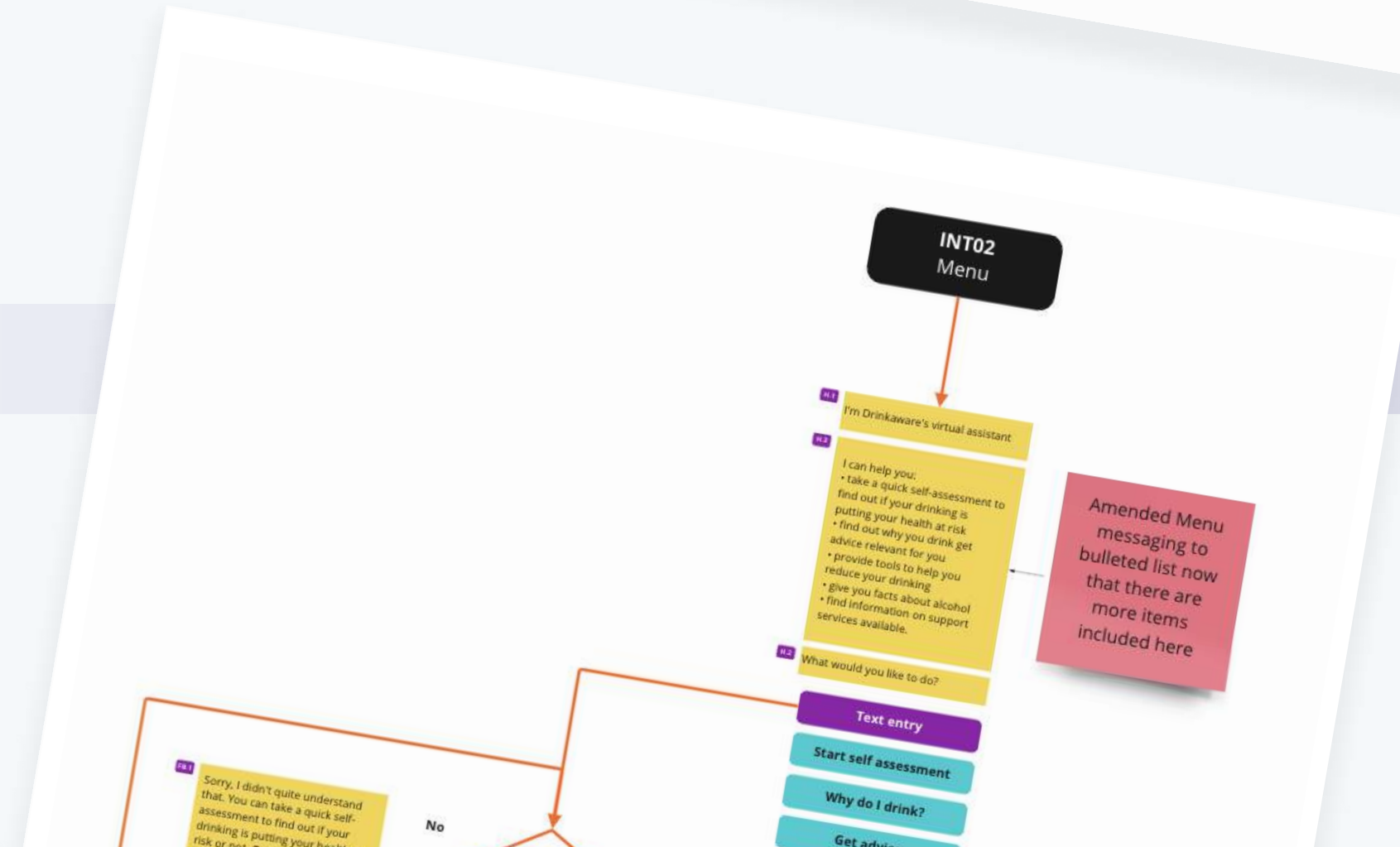
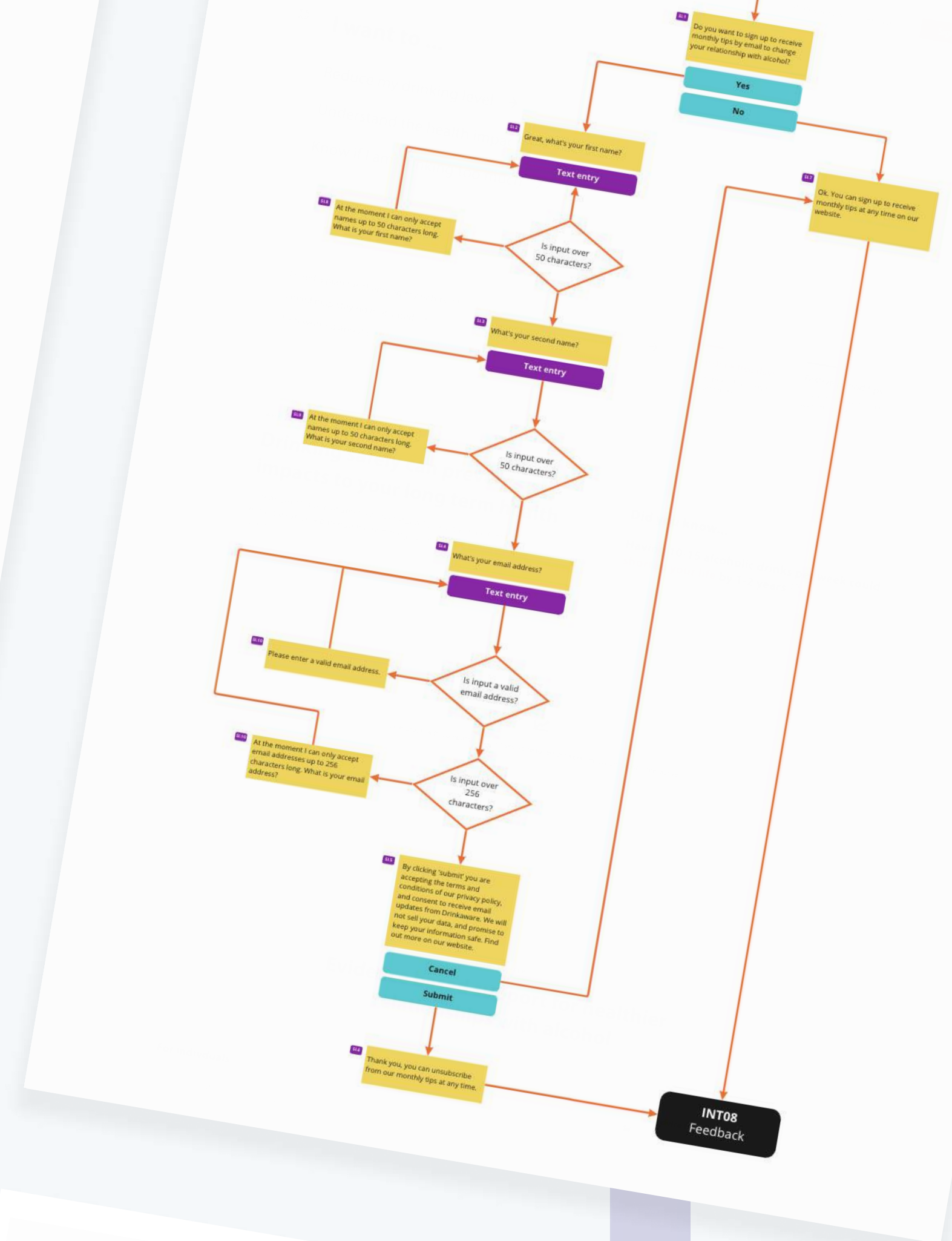


Advice for self vs others



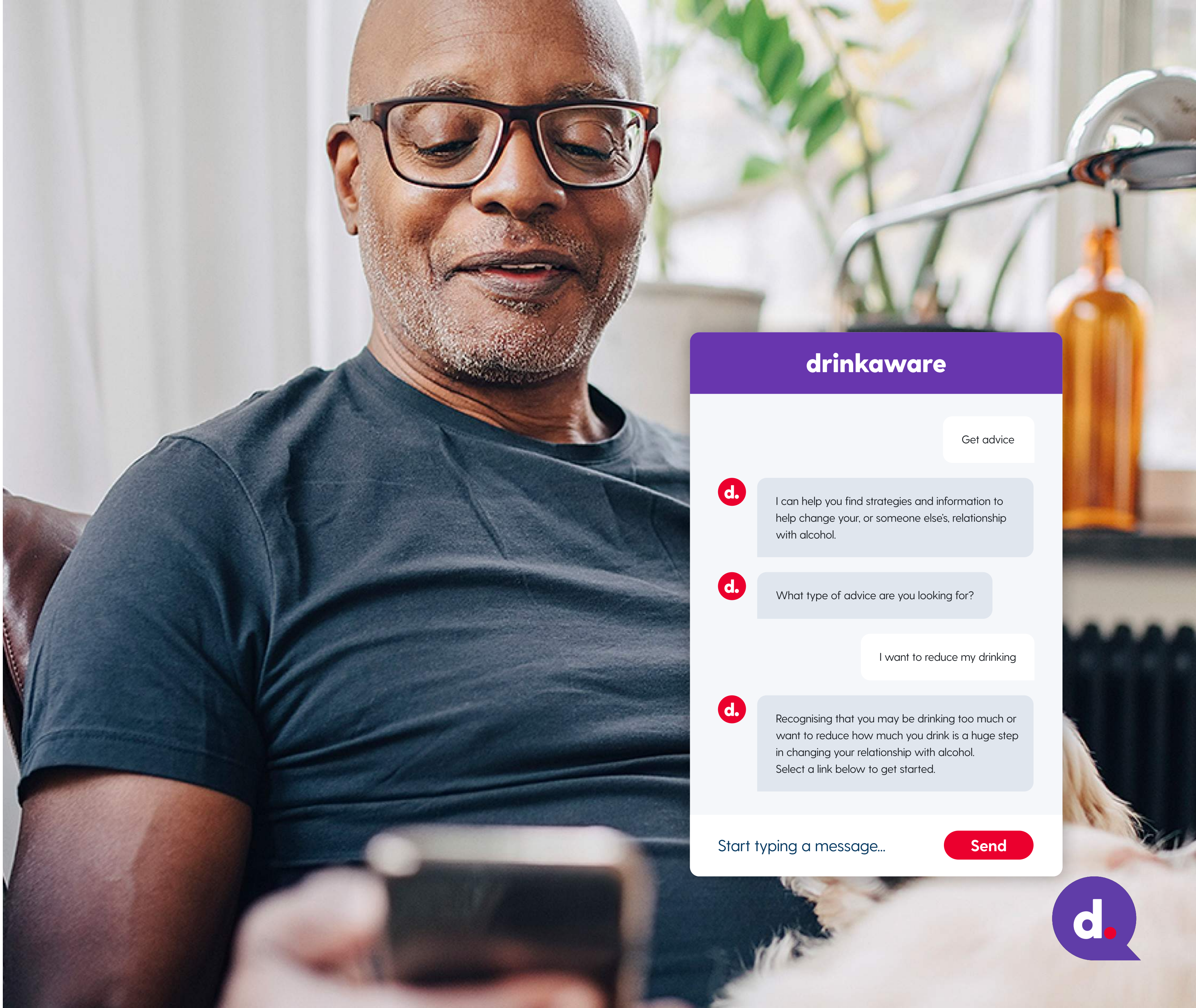
- I want to reduce my drinking
- I want to stop drinking
- Advice for someone else





How we built it

From this work an architecture and feature set were devised, with the goal of packing a broad range of functionality into the chatbot to test user responsiveness to different feature sets. The script for the chatbot was developed in close collaboration with Drinkaware and their medical advisory team; a key challenge in this stage was helping Drinkaware change mindset from their standard approach to content writing to more concise, conversational copy composition.



drinkaware

Get advice

d.

I can help you find strategies and information to help change your, or someone else's, relationship with alcohol.

d.

What type of advice are you looking for?

I want to reduce my drinking

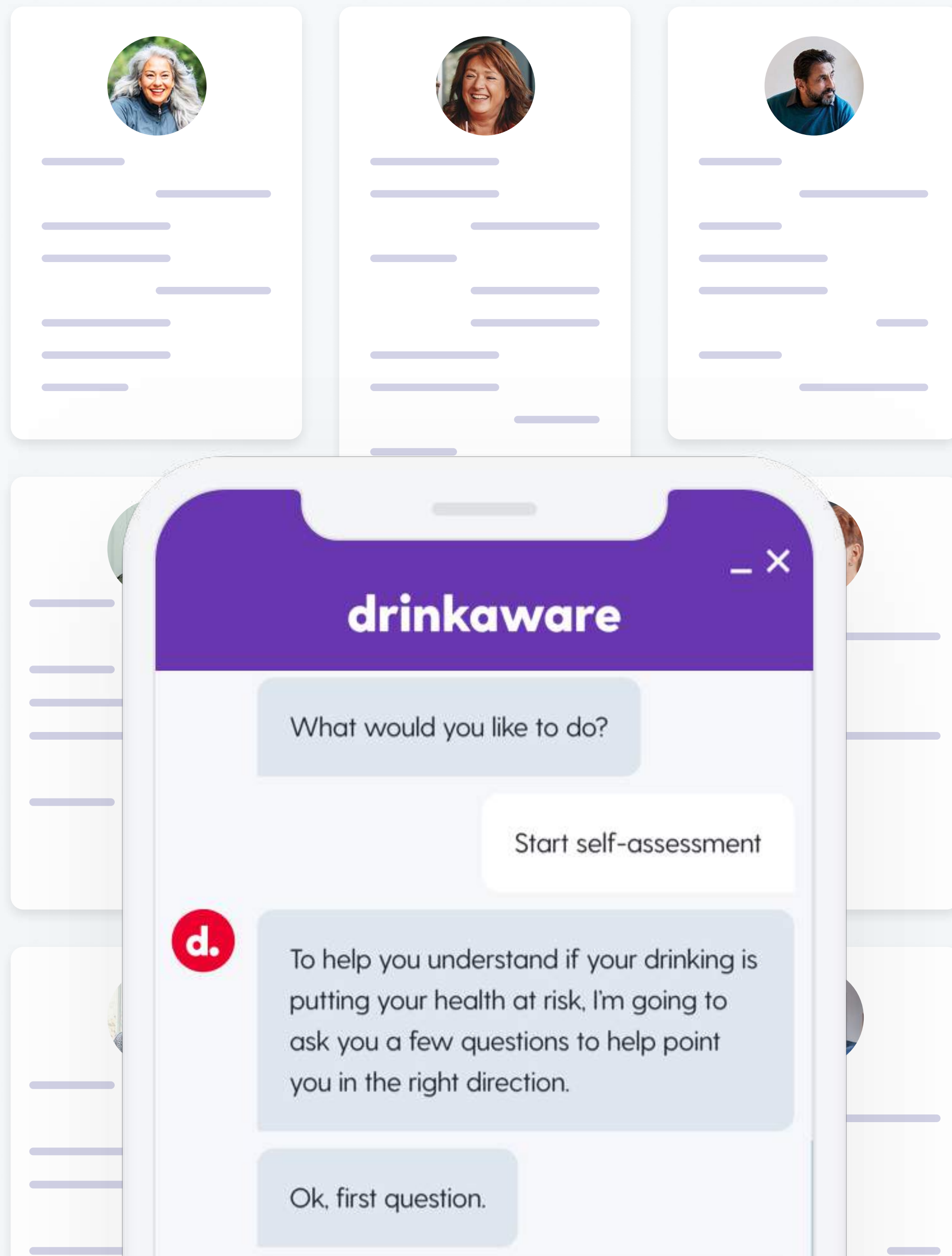
d.

Recognising that you may be drinking too much or want to reduce how much you drink is a huge step in changing your relationship with alcohol. Select a link below to get started.

Start typing a message...

Send





How we built it

We then developed the chatbot through a series of agile development sprints, before entering a phase of testing and fine-tuning, working closely with Drinkaware throughout to make sure key journeys were accounted for and multiple user scenarios resulted in the right advice being given. The chatbot was finally launched to the public in September 2021.

In December 2021, Screenmedia conducted analysis of the first few months of the chatbot's operation, reviewing thousands of user transcripts. This was particularly illuminating as Drinkaware had never had access to qualitative information at the depth and richness with which users were conversing with the chatbot.

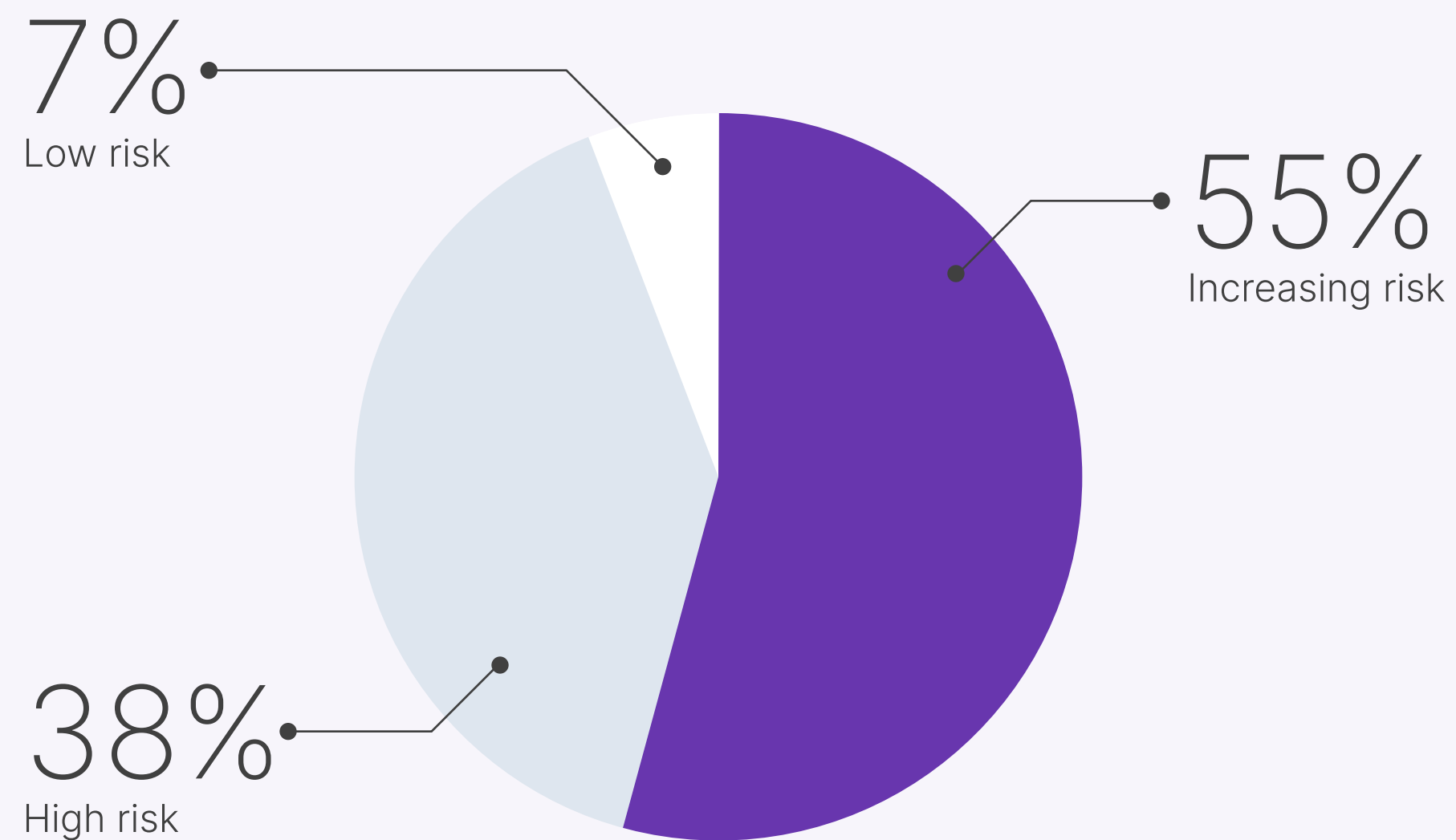
From this, a second phase of the chatbot was developed, with new features being added in 2022 which address gaps identified from the assessment of user interaction. Tools which are new to both the chatbot and Drinkaware are being developed, such as a new tool backed by academic research to identify individual user motivations for drinking.

The insights from the chatbot are proving very valuable to Drinkaware; for identifying gaps in provision and developing content, for iterating products and tools, and for the first time being able to use product data to inform new strategy.

● The impact

The conversational interface provides new communication modalities for users to receive information, a drinking assessment, and guidance on a personal level that can help them develop agency to change their behaviours, in turn delivering improved health outcomes.

Since its launch in September 2021, over 40k people have used the chatbot. This is organic traffic with no promotion to date. Key findings include:



4x

more people now use the chatbot than Drinkchat in the same period

32%

of 'Chat with and Advisor' stats are up since the chatbot launched.

45%

of users were triaged into Alcohol Support Services.

183

people have triggered the crisis dialog.

The impact

Although this project is small-scale, low-cost and not necessarily groundbreaking in comparison to what other organisations are doing with AI, it is having a transformational impact on Drinkaware's business. For example, Drinkaware now know that 7% of chatbot users are low risk, with 55% increasing and 38% high (compared to UK drinking population respectively 56%-28%-17%).

These data-driven insights are already informing their research and helping them ideate and iterate responsive digital solutions and health-based interventions based on user need, specifically the needs of those most at risk of alcohol harm.

We believe this is the first time a chatbot has been used in the UK to deliver alcohol Identification and Brief Advice. It has the potential to transform understanding of alcohol harm, triage, and access into alcohol support services, as well as help Drinkaware uncover insights into segments where research and support is poor, such as transgender and non-binary individuals.

Drinkaware may be a small charity with staff of 30 and a new digital team (of two years) but it has significant reach with over 6 million unique users to the Drinkaware website in 2021 and 1.1m people supported via their vital tools.

