

Response from Cumbria County Council to the National Alcohol Strategy

Cumbria County Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Alcohol Strategy Consultation. The council also welcomes the fact that this consultation has raised the level of national awareness of the negative impact of alcohol in fuelling anti - social behaviour and crime in our communities, something that this council has been concerned with for some time.

The debate, however, is complex in nature and we are keen to ensure that thorough consideration is given to all aspects of this issue. We are seeking to reduce excessive alcohol consumption in our towns and villages but recognise that the factors that lead to this are many and varied.

The new role for Local Authorities to lead health improvement and the repositioning of public health as part of the county council means that we will be in a strong position to work together on the wide range of circumstances that can lead to alcohol abuse. This will allow us to consider a full range of possible solutions which may or may not include policies for minimum price and/or licensing conditions.

Societal issues that exist at the very heart of our communities including isolation, worklessness, mental health and mental illness, poverty, stress and depression need to be tackled and our experience in Cumbria has shown that there are many views about the best way to drive improvements and that different communities may well respond to different interventions.

Alcohol and alcohol abuse was raised as one of our “wicked issues” at the time of developing joint countywide priorities some years ago and remains as such now. It is known to be a fundamental issue of concern and cross cutting in nature by the council and all of its partners. There are known impacts on the economy, the environment and the health and well being of our communities, and on community safety. We know too, however, that a balance must be struck between understanding the negative impact that alcohol use and abuse can have, alongside the positive contribution that sensible drinking can have on the social well-being of communities and the local economy.

Through key strategic partnerships such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children’s Trust Board and the Safer Cumbria Partnership, the county council is working with key strategic partners on this critical issue to understand the complex issues associated with alcohol use and abuse, and develop interventions and approaches that are relevant and appropriate for the diverse communities of Cumbria.

For these reasons, Cumbria County Council would welcome the opportunity to work closely with government on a broad and solution focused approach in the future that would limit the harm that alcohol can cause.

