

Alcohol Strategy Consultation 4th Floor
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

1st February 2013

Dear Sirs

Consultation response on the Government policies to cut alcohol fuelled crime and anti-social behaviour

We would like to respond to the above consultation on behalf of the Safe Newcastle Board, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for Newcastle upon Tyne.

Every day we see the endemic impact that alcohol is having on individuals, families and communities in Newcastle, including for example

- Over 50% of offenders in Newcastle have been assessed as having alcohol as a criminogenic need.
- 87% of these offenders admitted to engaging in “binge drinking” and 80% had engaged in violent behaviour linked to their alcohol consumption.
- Whilst there are overall reductions in crime in Newcastle, the proportion that that relates to alcohol is increasing.
- Alcohol related anti-social behavior is a local policing priority in our City Centre and some of our neighbourhoods.
- Approximately 50% of domestic abuse in Newcastle is linked to alcohol
- Alcohol misuse has been identified as an issue in 28% of all child protection conferences in Newcastle.

As a consequence, here is also a heavy financial burden on the City including

- £28.27 million in costs to the NHS
- £44.19 million in crime and licensing costs
- £58.86 million in costs to the workplace and wider economy
- £18.31 million in social services costs

That works equates to £512 for every man, woman and child in Newcastle. This comes at a time of austerity when all our partners have to continue to deliver front line services with significantly reduced resources.

Our partners have been increasingly concerned about the impact of low cost alcohol particularly cider and lager which are attractive both to under age drinkers and adult street drinkers. Evidence from our Alcoholwatch scheme demonstrates that it is this low cost alcohol which is most likely to be seized from chronic and dependent drinkers who, as well as causing harm to themselves, cause significant public nuisance and anti-social behaviour. The alcohol consumed by these drinkers is predominantly bought from the off-trade and can be obtained for as little as 16p per unit in Newcastle.

We therefore support the introduction of a minimum unit price as it is a highly targeted and effective approach that would have a significant impact on reducing under age sales and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour.

However, we believe that this measure does not go far enough and needs to be set at an effective and realistic level. The Safe Newcastle Board agreed on 13 December 2012, that the minimum price should be no lower than 50p per unit, as recommended by the previous Chief Medical Officer. We are also concerned about cross border issues for the North East if England sets a different level than Scotland.

In terms of the other proposals being consulted on:

Safe Newcastle supports the plan to introduce a ban on multi-buy discount as this will help level the pricing structure between the on-trade and off-trade. In Newcastle over 50% of alcohol is purchased from the off-trade and consumed at home and over 50% of people admit preloading at home before a night out, causing problems in our City Centre.

Whilst the current mandatory licensing conditions on irresponsible drinks promotions in pubs and clubs, are having some effect, they are not in line with current drinks promotions. Any offers which encourage greater levels of consumption than intended should not be permitted such as price-based promotions, drinks sold in one large container for consumption from that container e.g. 'goldfish bowls', mobile sales e.g. shots sold from a tray or dispensed from a tank at your table. We do not support offering any alcoholic drink cheaper than one without alcohol.

We welcome the introduction of health as a licensing objective for cumulative impact policy but view that it should be given equal weight with the other licensing objectives.

Whilst we would support a reduction in burdens on business, we are concerned that a relaxation of the regulation on any businesses which sell

alcohol will only increase the availability and send out concerning messages about the place that alcohol has in our culture.

This consultation is a real opportunity to make significant progress in tackling pervasive alcohol misuse and we would urge the Government to recognise the independent evidence base from police, public health and other frontline professionals and reduce the affordability and availability of alcohol.

