

Have you got what it takes?

Tackling alcohol misuse



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Important facts

The Government will continue to build on the Alcohol Strategy, which was launched in 2012, to tackle alcohol as a driver of crime and to support people to stay healthy, whilst cutting red tape for responsible businesses and supporting local pubs.

Although alcohol consumption has fallen in recent years, the harms associated with alcohol remain too high.

Alcohol-related harm is estimated to cost society over £21 billion per year:

- **£11 billion** – the cost of alcohol-related crime in England & Wales. This includes the estimated direct cost to the police of **£0.7 billion**.
- **£3.5 billion** – the cost to the National Health Service.
- **£7.3 billion** – the cost in lost productivity due to alcohol.

Alcohol is a significant contributory factor in crime and disorder. Around half (53%) of all violent crimes are alcohol-related, with two-thirds (64%) of all violent crimes involving strangers attributable to alcohol-consumption. Alcohol is also associated with over a third (36%) of domestic violence incidents.

There is also a link between non-violent crime and alcohol. 36% of penalty notices for disorder in 2014/15 were issued for being drunk and disorderly. Alcohol is closely associated with anti-social behaviour with nearly one fifth of adults (18%) perceiving people being drunk or rowdy as a problem in their local area in 2014/15.

Section 1: The Licensing Act 2003

The regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol is set out in the Licensing Act 2003. Businesses, organisations and individuals who want to sell or supply alcohol in England and Wales must have a licence or other authorisation from a licensing authority. The law governing this area is overseen by the Home Office.

The Licensing Act regulates four 'licensable activities':

- 1) the sale by retail of alcohol;
- 2) the supply of alcohol (in a members' club)
- 3) the provision of regulated entertainment; and
- 4) the provision of late night refreshment (between 11pm and 5am).

Under the 2003 Act, district and some county councils have responsibility for the administration of licensing. They are referred to as licensing authorities. Licensing authorities are responsible for issuing licences (premises licences, club premises certificates, personal licences) and notices – currently only the Temporary Event Notice (TEN) is available. Likewise, they administer applications to make changes to existing licences and notices.

Licensing authorities must carry out their functions with a view to promoting the four licensing objectives. These are:

- 1) the prevention of crime and disorder;
- 2) public safety;
- 3) the prevention of public nuisance; and
- 4) the protection of children from harm.

Section 2: Rebalancing the Licensing Act

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 has, partly by way of amendment to the Licensing Act 2003, given local areas the tools and powers they need to manage the night-time economy, including the ability to restrict opening and closing hours, set licensing fees locally (not yet in force); control the density of licensed premises and charge a late-night levy to support policing.

This included:

- **cracking down on irresponsible businesses which persistently sell alcohol to children by increasing the fines available and increasing the powers of the police and local councils to close premises down;**
- **giving local residents a greater say by requiring licensing authorities to publish more information on-line, and by scrapping the 'vicinity test' so that anyone can make representations about licensing decisions regardless of whether they live close to the premises concerned; and**

- **introducing the Late Night Levy so that those businesses that trade into the night make a contribution to the costs of policing.**

Section 3: 2012 Alcohol Strategy

The 2012 Alcohol Strategy sought to reduce the harms caused by irresponsible and excessive drinking, without disproportionately affecting responsible drinkers.

The Coalition Government pursued a programme to achieve these outcomes based around three themes:

- **Targeted national action:** Banned the sale of alcohol in England and Wales below the level of the alcohol duty plus VAT. Improved the effectiveness of mandatory licensing conditions. New powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enable alcohol-related issues to be dealt with. Challenged the alcohol industry to take voluntary action on products and retail practices.
- **Supported activity at a local level:** Gave local areas powers to deal with problem premises and gave residents a greater say about licensing decisions in their area. Enabled local councils to collect a Late Night Levy from the licensed trade towards the cost of policing. Established 20 Local Alcohol Action Areas (LAAAs).
- **Promoted growth and supported responsible businesses:** Package of deregulation measures to remove licensing burdens to support responsible businesses, whilst maintaining important safeguards.

Further information

What else is the Government doing?

The Government made a manifesto commitment to publish a Modern Crime Prevention Strategy and we expect alcohol to feature prominently in the strategy. As part of this, the Government will consider whether any changes to the Licensing Act 2003 are required to help local authorities and the police prevent alcohol related crime.