

A summary of the Government's Alcohol Strategy

The Government today (March 23) launched its much anticipated Alcohol Strategy. Balance has looked behind the headlines and drawn out the key points into this summary.

1. Headlines

The Government will:

- Introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol.
- Consult on introducing a ban on multi-buy promotions.
- Give stronger powers to control the density of licensed premises and make health a licensing objective for this purpose.
- Give areas the powers to restrict alcohol sales if late opening is causing problems through extended powers to make Early Morning Restriction Orders.
- Introduce a new late night levy so that those businesses that trade into the late night contribute towards the cost of policing.
- Pilot sobriety schemes for those people whose offending is linked to excessive alcohol consumption.
- Support hospitals to tackle unacceptable drunken behaviour at A&E.

Building on its Responsibility Deal, the Government will:

- Give consumers a wider choice of lower strength products in both the on-trade and off-trade, taking one billion units out of the market by 2015.
- Extend a challenge to all of industry to make more progress, more quickly on the responsible production, sale and promotion of alcohol.

2. Aims and objectives

The Government has outlined the outcomes it wants the strategy to achieve. These are:

- A change in behaviour so that people think it is not acceptable to drink in ways that could cause harm to themselves or others.
- A reduction in the amount of alcohol-fuelled violent crime.
- A reduction in the number of adults drinking above the NHS guidelines.
- A reduction in the number of people "binge drinking".
- A reduction in the number of alcohol-related deaths.
- A sustained reduction in both the numbers of 11-15 year olds drinking alcohol and the amounts consumed.

3. Reducing the availability of cheap alcohol

The Strategy recognises that increased alcohol price reduces consumption and related problems. To increase price, it proposes:

- Supporting any future changes to EU rules to allow duty on wine to rise in line with alcoholic strength.
- The introduction of a minimum unit price (MUP).
- A consultation on a ban on multi-buy promotions in the off-trade meaning that multiple bottles or cans could not be sold cheaper than the multiple of one bottle or can.

Given the Government's intention to introduce MUP, it does not currently intend to implement a ban on the below cost sale of alcohol (defined as Duty+VAT).

The Government intends to work with industry to use any additional revenue to provide better value to customers in other areas (ending the situation where loss-leading on

alcohol means that moderate drinkers effectively subsidise heavy drinkers through the cost of their weekly shop).

4. Alcohol advertising

The Strategy acknowledges the link between advertising and alcohol consumption, particularly in those under 18. The strategy proposes that Government work with industry and regulators to:

- Ensure that where unacceptable marketing does occur, it results in the removal of offending brands from retailers.
- Help raise public awareness of the controls and encourage public feedback.
- Ensure that adverts promoting alcohol are not shown during programmes of high appeal to young people.
- Ensure the full and vigorous application of ASA powers to online and social media and work with industry to develop a scheme to verify people's actual ages, which will apply to alcohol company websites and associated social media.
- Look at the rules and incentives that might inhibit the promotion of lower strength alcohol products.

5. Fraud

The Government will consult on alcohol anti-fraud measures, including the introduction of fiscal marks for beer, supply chain legislation, and a licensing scheme for wholesale alcohol dealers.

6. Changing behaviour at local level

The strategy highlights the role that local communities, services and business can play in tackling alcohol misuse. The Strategy reports the successes of areas such as Durham and schemes such as Best Bar None, Pubwatch and Business Improvement Districts.

Proposed changes under the Strategy include:

- From 25 April 2012, licensing authorities and local health bodies will formally become 'responsible authorities' ensuring they are automatically notified of an application or review and can more easily instigate a review of a licence.
- When it comes to imposing conditions on a licence, reducing the evidential threshold from 'necessary' to 'appropriate'.
- Anyone – no matter where they live – will be able to input into a decision to grant or revoke an alcohol licence, not just those that live in the immediate vicinity.
- From October 2012, extended powers to make Early Morning Restriction Orders (EMROs) will enable local areas to restrict alcohol sales late at night if they are causing problems.
- The Government will amend the statutory guidance on the Licensing Act 2003 to make clear that Cumulative Impact Policies (CIPs) apply to both the on-trade and the off-trade and that licensing authorities can reflect the needs of their local area by using measures such as fixed closing times, staggered closing times and zoning where they consider them to be appropriate.
- From October 2012, a new late night levy will empower local areas to make those businesses that sell alcohol late into the night contribute towards the cost of policing and wider local authority action. This will help enable visible and proactive policing at targeted locations where there are local needs.
- Local health bodies will be able to instigate a licence review. This means that a hospital that is regularly dealing with patients at A&E as a result of alcohol-related violence at a particular pub will now be able to instigate a licence review at those

premises. If things do not improve, the Government would expect the premises to lose their licence.

- Innovative trials of enforced sobriety schemes making use of existing powers.

7. Working across boundaries

The Strategy aims to encourage all hospitals to share non-confidential information on alcohol-related injuries with the police.

8. Evidence based action on health harms

- Funding available through the Public Health Grant will allow local authorities to commission Identification and Brief Advice.
- Alcohol liaison nurses may in future be co-funded by Clinical Commissioning Groups alongside Local Authorities.

9. Working with the industry

The Strategy sets out that the Government will:

- Continue to work with producers, retailers and NGOs to help reshape how people drink and how they think about alcohol in support of the core commitment.
- Welcome the new pledge from industry to give consumers a wider choice of lower strength products in both the on-trade and the off-trade to take one billion units out of the market by 2015.
- Extend the Responsibility Deal agreement on labels to include calorie content.
- Incentivise smaller servings by providing single/small measures as the default and only providing large measures when specifically requested.
- Work with industry to change the ease of availability of alcohol through responsible product placement, for example ensuring that alcohol sold in shops is not sold alongside any product that appeals to children.

10. Cutting red tape

The Government intends to seek views on giving licensing authorities greater freedom to take decisions that reflect local need, including:

- Simpler, locally-determined processes for issuing a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) and increasing the current limit for TENs that can be used at single premises from 12 to 15 or 18, to enable occasional sales of alcohol at community events.
- Reducing the burden of licensing on certain types of businesses that provide minimal alcohol sales and are not impacting on crime and disorder, for example by removing the need for some premises to hold a personal licence.

11. Supporting individual change

The Strategy proposes a number of actions, including:

- Making the risks associated with alcohol a key feature of a new £2.6 million youth marketing programme aimed to drive further reductions in regular smoking, drinking, drug use and risky sexual behaviour during the teenage years.
- Piloting interventions which provide alcohol advice in sexual health clinics.
- Extending Chage4Life, if the evidence shows the campaign improves health outcomes and is good value for money
- Overseeing a review of the alcohol guidelines for adults. This will take account of available science on how we can best communicate the risks from alcohol, improving the public's understanding of both personal risks and societal harms.
- The Department of Health will include alcohol identification and any subsequent brief advice needed within the NHS Health Check for adults from age 40 to 75 for

the first time from April 2013. It will also look at the data from the recently published Screening and Intervention Programme for Sensible Drinking (SIPS) research to see if it can support further action by GPs via the Quality and Outcomes Framework.

- Encouraging all hospitals to employ Alcohol Liaison Nurses.

12. Offenders

- Areas are advised to identify and address problems as early as possible by identifying treatable stages throughout the criminal justice pathway.
- Prisons are important places for rehabilitation and tackling dependency and the Government will develop, by July 2012, an alcohol interventions pathway and outcome framework in four prisons.