

Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner

Topic: Alcohol

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Purpose of briefing

To provide a briefing on alcohol policy and an update on alcohol-related priority workstreams.

Background

The PCC published an alcohol policy priority document which has been supported by the 2 Directors of Public Health for Durham and Darlington. It considers evidence-based measures that can or have been taken to form a coherent strategy to reduce the harms of alcohol and to determine what can be achieved working together at a local level ([PCVC alcohol policy priorities](#)).

The 2 Community Safety Partnerships include 'reduce the harm caused by alcohol' as a priority in their strategic harm reduction plans. County Durham has a joint drugs and alcohol harm reduction action plan, whereas Darlington Borough Council is currently devising a refreshed alcohol strategy. (*The PCVC alcohol policy priorities includes the 2 plans on a page for each Local Authority*).

Nationally, there has been no new alcohol strategy since the UK Alcohol Strategy 2012. The Government committed to an Addictions Strategy for 2020. The Home Office Modern Crime Prevention Strategy, 2016 is the latest Government Strategy which describes alcohol as a key driver of crime. Current figures suggest that approximately 18% of incidents are alcohol-related in Durham.

The APCC has a substance misuse portfolio group which is currently chaired by the Derbyshire PCC-Hardyal Dhinsda.

Current issues

A number of alcohol policy workstreams have been progressed in collaboration with the 2 other NE PCCs. A lot of campaigning work has occurred in the past to try to lobby the Government to change its approach to minimise the harm caused by alcohol, particularly around the Night Time Economy and hidden violence in the home, e.g domestic abuse. Some of these include:

- Reduction in the drink/drive limit
- Increase in Alcohol Duty
- Introduction of a flexible Night-time Levy
- Introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing
- Punched Out Cold Campaign, Ask For Angela Campaign

There are also a number of priority areas which the office has been focusing on:

1. Introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing

The UK Alcohol Strategy 2012 included a plan to introduce a policy called 'Minimum Unit Pricing' (MUP). This is aimed at reducing alcohol related harm which each year costs the NHS £3.5 billion and wider society £21 billion. Under MUP, the price at which alcohol can be sold is linked to the amount of pure alcohol (e.g. under a MUP of 50p per alcohol unit, a bottle of wine containing 10 units could not be sold for less than £5). Although research shows this policy would reduce harmful alcohol

consumption, and the number of hospital admissions and deaths caused by alcohol, by 2014 the Government decided not to introduce MUP.

Currently, the Welsh Assembly members have approved the Welsh Government's plans to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol of 50p from 2nd March 2020. Scotland's MUP legislation was introduced on the 1st May 2019, and a bill is also currently passing through the Irish Government.

Sheffield University, funded by NHS National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was commissioned to evaluate the impact of the local implementation of a minimum price for a unit of alcohol. Local modelling data makes the case for the benefits of introducing MUP in the NE: reduced alcohol consumption levels, reduced alcohol related hospital admissions, reduced alcohol related crime and reduced alcohol related deaths within our most disadvantaged communities.

2. Flexible Night Time Levy

Following changes to the Policing and Crime Act 2017, PCCs now have the right to formally request the licensing authority to consider implementing the levy. This does not compel the LA to do so, but they must at the very least formally respond if they do not intend to do so.

3. Cardiff Model Implementation

The Cardiff Model is aimed at getting a better picture of where violence is occurring by combining and mapping both hospital and police data on violence in order to prevent violence.

4. Interlocks/Sobriety Tags

An ignition interlock is a device installed in a vehicle which measures the amount of alcohol someone has consumed using breath testing and the engine won't begin if there is alcohol in the system (see additional [briefing](#)).

Alcohol Abstinence Monitoring Requirements enable a period of mandated sobriety to be monitored by offender managers using ankle tags (see individual [briefing](#)).

The PCC has purchased sobriety tags and alcohol interlocks which are used by the force on a voluntary basis. The Government is legislating for the adoption of these as part of a community sentence, and as such the office is exploring the introduction of sobriety tags as a court-imposed community order to reduce alcohol-related reoffending in County Durham and Darlington, together with increasing the use of alcohol treatment orders.

5. Public Health ring-fenced grant for substances misuse services

Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible for responding to alcohol harms in their communities by means of a public Health grant. LAs have significant budget cuts to their public health allocations and the ring-fence for firm allocations of the local government public health grant are likely to be removed. The PCC has a role in calling on the Government to maintain the ring-fence and to ensure that LAs maintain their drug and alcohol service budgets, to enable vital services to reduce alcohol harm to be commissioned by the Local Authority. Under current provisions, the role of the PCC is to ensure that relevant pathways are in place with the commissioned services to ensure that victims and offenders receive the support they require.

Partnership involvement

The office engages with the Durham harm reduction partnership group, hosted by the CSP and the regional alcohol champions crime and disorder group, hosted by Balance. An Integrated Care Alcohol Steering Group has been formed regionally, looking into health impacts of alcohol.

Police involvement

The force has a responsibility for the delivery of alcohol-related interventions, licencing, managing the evening and night time economy, and enforcement of alcohol-related incidents and crimes.

People to meet

Directors of Public Health for County Durham and Darlington

Director of Balance, the NE Alcohol Office

Chief Superintendent with an alcohol lead and Chief Inspector with a licensing lead