



Consultation on National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

BECON is a network of 100 BME black and voluntary organisations in the North East of England (individual members estimated at 10,000). This network has been established by the Home Office to contribute to networking, capacity building and to influence policy at a regional level. BECON works in partnership with Government Office, North East, the North East Assembly, the Regional Development Agency as well as sub-regional and local partnerships. The response to the consultation incorporates the perspectives of the network but has been written by the Director of BECON only and will not reflect every view within the BECON network.

This Strategy is written as if Britain is monocultural and pays little attention to those cultures where the use and misuse of alcohol is minimal e.g. in the introduction 'drinking plays a mostly enjoyable part in our culture'. It therefore over-emphasizes the positive aspects of alcohol use e.g. question 10 and question 60 whereas it could helpfully learn from other communities where, for example, networking in the workplace is facilitated without alcohol! This strategy therefore misses an opportunity to consider alternative aids to socialising and networking.

- Q1 Education, Advertising, Cost
- Q4 Government should be included here
- Q7 Alcohol free alternatives and venues which are also fun especially for young people
- Q9 The evidence is of low alcohol consumption amongst minority ethnic groups (particularly Muslim groups). This should be valued and promoted. Women need to be valued and have equal access to opportunities as part of a long term strategy to reduce a copying of negative male behaviour.
- Q10 Alcohol is a relaxant in social situations. We need to identify other aids to relaxation in social situations.
- Q11 There are regional differences with the North East having a culture of drinking to excess on Friday and Saturday evenings. This clearly is not every individual or community in the North East.
- Q12 Fashion, Marketing, Peer group, Lack of alternatives are major contributors.
- Q17 Education on risks and benefits, supported access to alternatives. Professionals need to be open about their own alcohol use, reasons and impact, share alternatives in non-judgmental way.
- Q18 Information alone is inadequate for change. Experiential learning and changes to life context are essential.
- Q21 Plastic bottles and glasses everywhere
- Q30 Not as currently done-to blame, punish and stigmatise. We need to value young people, their well-being and their potential as a starting point.

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Q31 Yes

Q35 There is no excuse for domestic violence. Adding the victim in this sentence dangerously colludes with the victim blaming that maintains domestic abuse. We need to tackle both separately and vigorously.

The paragraph on vulnerability is confusing: there are two aspects to vulnerability, firstly physical vulnerability to effects because of weight, metabolism including gender, health conditions and secondly vulnerability to being attracted because of life circumstances, experiences. It is dangerous and stigmatising to confuse the two.

Q45 People in pubs, bars, restaurants, off-licenses!

Q49 They do not work!

The paragraph on the market makes clear the ambivalence of this document. The market is interested in profit not well being and market solutions, apart from alcohol free alternatives can not help.

I hope this has been of help.

Sincerely

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