

**Response to the National Alcohol Strategy Consultation –
Response by Durham Drug Action Team**

Points that the Drug Action Team would want considered in the strategy are:-

1. It is important that Performance Management Targets are developed for Alcohol Treatment Services. There is an imbalance with a focus on targets only relating to Drug Treatment Services. Often Alcohol Treatment Services are provided alongside or within local drugs services. This position has been tolerated by the National Treatment Agency and others so far however, if performance pressures increase on the Drugs Treatment Agenda, this will effectively down prioritize alcohol referrals as a service priority.
2. The alcohol industry needs to take responsibility for its own products. Currently there is aggressive marketing, licensing and pricing aimed particularly at young people.
3. The provision of youth facilities that are alcohol free need to be developed.
4. Any alcohol strategy cannot be resource free. There is a fundamental contradiction in maintaining high levels of tax revenue from alcohol sales without proportionate investment to address the social and health impact of alcohol on individuals in communities. There may be an argument for a dedicated form of taxation from alcohol sales to support treatment and prevention services.
5. The growth of illicit markets in bootlegging both rob the Exchequer of income and effectively increase supplies to young people. As much as drugs are related to acquisitive crime alcohol has direct relationships with violent crime. £1 spent upon treatment from the legal drug problem offsets £3 within the Criminal Justice System. Similar arguments could be made in relation to the provision of treatment and prevention services for alcohol when contrasted against the impact, for example of chronic drink problems upon the NHS, the cost of working days lost through alcohol, the impact of criminal damage, the court costs etc. Additionally the social and personal cost of injuries, illness, accidents and domestic violence makes a compelling business case for new resources.
6. Drug and Alcohol Action Teams seem to be the most appropriate vehicle for taking forward an Alcohol Strategy. These teams are now subject to increasing pressures of different interested Government Departments, DOH, Home Office, NTA etc. It is important that any strategy acknowledges the already evident tensions between Government Departments in relation to the Drugs Strategy and seeks to avoid replication of these in relation to the alcohol strategy.

It is hoped that the above gives a flavour of the “macro” strategic issues that relate to the Alcohol Strategy.

Detailed debate has already been evidenced at regional seminars.

I look forward to the formal response to the consultation process.

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On behalf of Durham Drug Action Team
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