



**Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland**  
**c/o Steria Shared Service Centre**  
**Ash House**  
**III Acres**  
**Princeton Drive**  
**Thornaby**  
**Stockton-On-Tees**  
**TS17 6AJ**

Email: [pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk)  
Website: <http://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk>

Police and Crime Commissioner:  
Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer:

Barry Coppinger  
Simon Dennis BA, Solicitor

Tel: 01642 301653  
Tel: 01642 301653

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The Right Honourable Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

3 May 2019

Dear Mr Hancock

## **Prevention Green Paper**

The Government's decision to publish a Green Paper on Prevention presents us with a unique opportunity to address some of the largest causes of preventable harm across society and I welcome its publication.

I am writing to you today to ensure that the impact of alcohol harm on individuals, communities, the public sector and the wider economy is acknowledged and addressed in the document with an approach which is both comprehensive and evidence-based.

According to the latest public opinion survey carried out by Balance, the North East Alcohol Office, more than one in four adults in the North East are drinking at levels which put them at increased risk of a range of diseases including heart disease, stroke, early onset dementia and at least seven different types of cancer. What's more worrying is that nine in 10 of them consider themselves to be light or moderate drinkers and are, therefore, unlikely to be taking personal action to reduce their alcohol intake<sup>1</sup>.

It is clear that these levels of consumption, which are mirrored across the UK, are driving harm which reaches every corner of society, as the following facts indicate:

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<sup>1</sup> Balance (2019): Alcohol in the North East. Are We Kidding Ourselves?



*The Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland is an accredited Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation.*

## Health Harms

- The latest figures for England show 1.1 million hospital admissions a year are related to alcohol, that's more than 7 per cent of all admissions<sup>2</sup>. Despite recent improvements, the North East still has the highest rate of admissions<sup>3</sup>
- Liver disease is the only major cause of death that's increasing with liver disease deaths in England up 400 per cent since 1970<sup>4</sup>. Our region has the highest rate of alcohol deaths in England<sup>5</sup>
- Worsening health inequalities: despite consuming less, men in routine occupations are 3.5 times more likely and women 5.7 times more likely to die from an alcohol related cause than those in higher and managerial positions<sup>6</sup>

## Harm to Others

- 40 per cent of violent crime is linked to alcohol<sup>7</sup>
- 28 per cent of domestic abuse is linked to alcohol use<sup>8</sup>
- In 2016/17 in England and Wales in 35.8% of sexual assault cases the offender was under the influence of alcohol<sup>9</sup>
- In 2016 drink driving was responsible for 230 deaths and over 9,000 casualties in Great Britain<sup>10</sup>
- More than one in three child deaths and serious injuries due to neglect involve alcohol
- It is estimated that more than 700,000 children live with a dependent drinker and these children are more likely to develop difficulties at school, consider suicide and develop eating disorders<sup>11 12</sup>

## Cost to Society

- Alcohol costs the NHS an estimated £3.5 billion every year,<sup>13</sup> and is projected to cost £17 billion over the next five years<sup>14</sup>
- Public Health England estimates the wider costs to the UK in 2016 were between £27 billion and £52 billion<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NHS Digital (2018) [Statistics on Alcohol](#)

<sup>3</sup> PHE: Local Alcohol Profiles for England

<sup>4</sup> The Lancet, [UK liver disease crisis](#)

<sup>5</sup> PHE: Local Alcohol Profiles for England

<sup>6</sup> Siegler, V et al (2011) [Social inequalities in alcohol-related mortality by National Statistics socio economic classification, England and Wales, 2001-2003](#), ONS Health Statistics Quarterly, 50.

<sup>7</sup> ONS (2018) [Nature of crime tables, violence. Table 3.10](#)

<sup>8</sup> ONS (2018) [Nature of crime tables, violence. Table 3.10](#)

<sup>9</sup> ONS (2018) Data on alcohol related incidents, years ending March 2011 to March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

<sup>10</sup> Department for Transport (2018) [Reported road casualties in Great Britain, final estimates involving illegal alcohol levels: 2016](#)

<sup>11</sup> Children's Commissioner (2012) [Silent voices: supporting children and young people affected by parental alcohol misuse](#)

<sup>12</sup> APPG on Children of Alcoholics (2017) [A manifesto for change](#)

<sup>13</sup> Home Office (2012) [Minimum unit price impact assessment](#)

<sup>14</sup> Foundation for Liver Research (2017) [Financial case for action on liver disease](#)

<sup>15</sup> Public Health England (2018) [PHE Research 2016 to 2017: annual review](#)

- More working years of life are lost from alcohol related causes than from the 10 most common cancers combined<sup>16</sup>
- Alcohol is the leading risk factor for ill health, early death and disability amongst 15-49-year-olds<sup>17</sup>

Given these facts it is clear that alcohol harm is not restricted to a small minority of drinkers and cannot be addressed by simply urging individual drinkers to consume less. In launching the prevention vision you recognised the role Government action had taken in reducing smoking<sup>18</sup>. It can, and must, play a similar role in reducing alcohol harms.

The solutions required are well understood and were set out by Public Health England in 2016 in its comprehensive document – *'The public burden of alcohol and the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol control policies: an evidence review'*. At its heart are measures to address the affordability, availability and promotion of alcohol. We urge your colleagues in the department to use it as a starting point when drafting the alcohol section of the Prevention Green Paper and we look forward to responding to it on its publication.

Yours sincerely,



Barry Copping  
Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

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<sup>16</sup> PHE (2016) [A rapid evidence review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol control policies: an English perspective](#), The Lancet

<sup>17</sup> PHE (2016) [The public health burden of alcohol and the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol control policies: an evidence review](#)

<sup>18</sup> Gov.uk, [Health Secretary launches 'Prevention is better than cure' vision](#)