



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Seema Kennedy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care

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Mr Barry Coppinger
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03 JUN 2019

Dear Mr Coppinger,

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 May to Matt Hancock about the Prevention Green Paper and alcohol harm.

I appreciate your concerns.

I wish to assure you that the Government takes the harms associated with alcohol very seriously.

Balance does excellent work in increasing awareness among adults and children of the harms caused by alcohol. This organisation is a great example of partnership working to educate and inform people on drinking alcohol responsibly.

The Government has committed £16 billion in funding to local councils over the current five-year Spending Review period to tackle public health issues, which include alcohol and drug treatments. Any decisions on the commissioning of effective drug and alcohol prevention and treatment services are the responsibility of local authorities, based on an assessment of local need. However, public health grant conditions make it clear that local authorities must have regard for the need to improve the take up of, and outcomes from, their drug and alcohol misuse treatment services.

In August 2016, the UK Chief Medical Officers published guidelines with the most up-to-date scientific information to help people make informed decisions about their drinking habits. These can be found at www.gov.uk by searching for 'alcohol consumption advice on low risk drinking'.

Since launching the revised guidelines, we have seen encouraging progress on the details of the guidance being placed on the labels of alcohol products by the alcohol industry; this is well in advance of the 1 September deadline we had set. The British Retail Consortium recently made it mandatory for all its members to display in full the Government guidance on alcohol labels. This will support consumers to make informed choices about their alcohol consumption.


The statistics show that overall alcohol consumption is falling. NHS Digital's *Statistics on Alcohol, England 2019*, published in February, shows that 58 per cent of survey respondents reported drinking alcohol in the previous week in 2017, which is a fall from 65 per cent in 2007.

While we welcome recent falls in alcohol consumption and harm, we are not complacent. Harms such as liver disease, as well as social impacts such as crime and domestic violence linked to alcohol, remain much too high.

We are doing more to support children living with alcohol-dependent parents as this is a particularly vulnerable group. The Government is investing £6 million over three years to provide additional support and improve outcomes for this group.

The Prevention Green Paper will aim to put prevention at the heart of our health and social care system for the long term. We are currently considering a number of policy options for inclusion in the Green Paper.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,


SEEMA KENNEDY