



Putting victims first in County Durham and Darlington



**VERA BAIRD**<sup>QC</sup>  
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER



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20.02.2018

Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
Direct Communications Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Copy to:  
Victoria Atkins MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability

Dear Home Secretary,

We are writing to express our concern about the damage cheap alcohol is doing to the North East of England and the pressure that it is putting on our respective police forces. We have chosen to write at this time because we believe the introduction of a minimum unit price (MUP) in Scotland offers us a unique opportunity to reverse that tide of harm.

According to Balance, the North East Alcohol Office, there were an estimated 239,000 alcohol related crimes in the region in 2015/16, costing the economy £331 million.

It is our police officers who are experiencing these problems on a daily basis. A survey of North East frontline officers in 2013 revealed that over half believe that alcohol related crime takes up at least half their workload, while only 14 per cent have never been subjected to an alcohol related assault.

The harms, of course, spread much wider than our forces. Alcohol harm costs the North East over £1 billion a year, with over half a million working days a year lost to alcohol related illness.

The North East is not alone in experiencing such problems. Alcohol related crime costs up to £13 billion a year in England and Wales, while alcohol is the leading cause of death amongst 15-49 year olds.

With Scotland set to tackle the harms caused by cheap alcohol through its introduction of a minimum unit price (MUP) in May, we would urge the Government to look again at the benefits it would deliver in England. Work by Sheffield University estimates that in its first five years, a 50p MUP would prevent 182,000 crimes, producing a saving of £711 million. In the North East, it would prevent 11,000 crimes and save £66 million – and these are likely to be conservative estimates.

We recognise that MUP is not a magic bullet, but by increasing the price of the cheapest off sales products consumed by the heaviest drinkers we believe it is highly targeted at those individuals who cause our forces the greatest problems. It also has widespread support from international bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Health Organisation (WHO); from national bodies such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the Royal Medical Colleges and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC); from the public, over half of whom support the measure; and from independent pub landlords who support it by a ratio of 2 to 1.

The poorest and most vulnerable in society suffer disproportionately from the harms caused by cheap alcohol and MUP would contribute significantly to your social justice agenda, with around 80% of the lives saved coming from routine and manual worker groups. We urge you not to delay its introduction. We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,



**Ron Hogg**  
PCVC – Durham.

**Dame Vera Baird**  
PCC – Northumbria.

**Barry Coppinger**  
PCC – Cleveland.