

Cabinet

10 June 2015



Local Government Declaration on Alcohol

Report of Corporate Management Team

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Councillor Joy Allen, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with an overview of the development and purpose of the Local Government Declaration on Alcohol (LGDA), attached as Appendix 2.
2. To request Cabinet sign the LGDA on behalf of the council.

Background

3. The Local Government Declaration on Alcohol is in response to the ongoing damage that alcohol does to communities across the North East. It is a pledge to take action and a statement that demonstrates Durham County Council's commitment to protecting local communities from the harm caused by alcohol.
4. The declaration was initiated following a meeting of the Regional Directors of Public Health Group following the Balance conference in November 2013, following a similar approach to that taken in relation to tobacco. Whilst the Declaration is intended as a regional statement of intent it has been led through collaboration between Gateshead Council and the regional alcohol office Balance.
5. The goal of the Declaration is both to demonstrate local authority leadership on tackling alcohol harm and also to make a collective statement about the importance of this issue nationally. Durham County Council has already agreed a motion at full Council highlighting to the main national political parties the need to:
 - Introduction of a minimum unit price of 50 pence per unit of alcohol
 - A comprehensive review of licensing legislation to ensure that licensing authorities are empowered to tackle alcohol related harm by, for example, controlling total availability of alcohol in their area, according to local need
 - Undertake an urgent review of alcohol advertising and sponsorship with a view to protecting children from the influence of alcohol marketing. This would include banning advertising in cinemas unless an 18 certificate film is being screened and withdrawing alcohol sponsorship from professional sport.

6. The commitments set out in the declaration will result in action across the system to address the harm that alcohol causes. The local authority may decide to place additional commitments to those set out regionally. It is suggested that the following is added: Continuing to work with our partners to deliver the outcomes agreed in the County Durham Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.
7. Balance, the regional alcohol office and Gateshead Council have already received widespread support for the declaration through the Directors of Public Health network, Association of North East (ANEC) Councils Chief Executives Forum and ANEC Mayors and Leaders Forum. Councillor Watson (Chair of ANEC and Leader of Sunderland City Council) has agreed to promote the declaration nationally via the Local Government Association.
8. The document has also been shared with the NHS Clinical Networks, Public Health England and the Police and Crime Commissioners in the region.
9. The LGDA is founded on the fact that the harm created by alcohol is extensive. Every year in the UK, there are thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of hospital admissions and over a million violent crimes linked to drinking alcohol. This is not a problem of a small minority. It is a problem that cuts across the entire population.
10. Alcohol impacts upon a significant number of frontline services including not only the NHS, Police and Ambulance Services but also local authority licensing and social service teams. Alcohol impacts upon the workplace, through lost productivity and absenteeism and on education, through truancy and disruption.
11. The personal, social and economic cost of alcohol has been estimated to be up to £55bn for England. Alcohol harm presents a significant financial burden across the North East economy as a whole. The total cost for the North East is estimated at 1.1 billion per year. In County Durham, it is estimated that alcohol costs approximately £212m each year.
12. In addition to the financial impact more than two in five (44%) violent crimes and 37% of domestic violence incidents are committed under the influence of alcohol; a price cannot be attributed to the social costs of these crimes. One fifth of all violent crime occurs in or near pubs and clubs and 45% of adults avoid town centres at night because of drunken behaviour.

Recommendations

13. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - Endorse and sign the declaration.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – No adverse implications

Staffing – No adverse implications

Risk – Reputational as all LAs in NE have agreed to sign the declaration.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – No adverse implications

Accommodation – No impact

Crime and Disorder – The implementation of the declaration has potential to have a positive impact upon crime and disorder in the longer term through facilitating a reduction in alcohol fuelled crime and disorder

Human Rights – There are no adverse implications on any human rights

Consultation – Consultation has already taken place at a regional level through Directors of Public Health, Association of North East Councils groups.

Procurement – No impact.

Disability Issues – None identified

Legal Implications – None identified

Appendix 2: The Declaration

Local government declaration on alcohol

We acknowledge that:

- Alcohol is one of the greatest causes of premature death and morbidity in our communities;
- Reducing alcohol harm in our communities significantly reduces costs to public services;
- Although lower income groups are not the heaviest drinkers, they suffer from the greatest alcohol harms;
- Evidence-based, government-led action to regulate the price, promotion and availability of alcohol is the most effective option for tackling alcohol harm;
- Although it might be appropriate to engage with elements of the alcohol industry around the management of the night-time economy, the alcohol industry should have no role in the development of alcohol policy or strategy;
- The volume and content of alcohol advertising influences young people to drink earlier and to consume more.

As leaders of our communities we welcome the:

- Opportunity for local government and key partners to lead local action to tackle alcohol harm and secure the health, welfare, social, economic and environmental benefits that come from reducing excessive alcohol consumption;
- Opportunity to further embed public health priorities within the local authority framework, particularly in relation to community safety, regulatory activity and economic regeneration.

We commit our Council from this date 10th June 2015 to act at a local level to reduce alcohol harm and health inequalities by:

- Influencing national government to take the most effective, evidence-based action to reduce alcohol harm, particularly via the introduction of greater regulations around the price, promotion and availability of alcohol;
- Influencing national government to rebalance the Licensing Act in favour of local authorities and communities, enabling local licensing authorities to control the number, density and availability of alcohol according to local requirements;
- Developing evidence-based strategies and commissioning plans with our local communities and partners including the local NHS Acute Trust, Clinical Commissioning Groups and the police;
- Ensuring that public health and community safety are accorded a high priority in all public policy-making about alcohol;
- Making best use of existing licensing powers to ensure effective management of the night-time economy;
- Raising awareness of the harm caused by alcohol to individuals and our communities, bringing it closer in public consciousness to other harmful products, such as tobacco;
- Continuing to work with our partners to deliver the outcomes agreed in the County Durham Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

Signatories

Leader of Council

Chief Executive

Director of Public Health

Endorsed by

