

**Overview and Scrutiny Review –  
Alcohol and its Demand on  
Emergency Services**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and  
Partnerships**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee review report on Alcohol and its demand on Emergency Services attached at appendix 2.

**Background**

2. The Committee has a role to scrutinise work of the Safe Durham Partnership. Members of the committee agreed to establish a working group to undertake a review of Alcohol and its demand on emergency services. The aim of this review was to gain an understanding of the impact of alcohol related incidents on levels of demand for emergency services within County Durham and to contribute evidence to support delivery of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. The review's focus was on understanding demand from emergency services and findings from a cumulative impact assessment and has looked at prevention work that has been undertaken to reduce demand.
3. To achieve this aim, the review has gathered evidence through desktop research, meetings with officers and service professionals from the Council's Public Health and Licensing Teams, attended the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner's Alcohol Harm Reduction conference and undertaken appropriate field study activity to gain an insight into the impact of alcohol on the emergency services.

**Conclusions**

4. Alcohol significantly impacts on the work of the emergency services. Drunkenness places an avoidable demand on our police, fire, ambulance and medical services. It also affects the safety of personnel working within these professions. The welfare of emergency personnel is paramount. It was a concern of the committee that staff face abuse and risk of assault in their daily work.
5. The review has also highlighted positive work undertaken by emergency services, Balance and the Office of the Durham Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner to raise awareness of the demand alcohol places on the public sector and the alcohol harm reduction initiatives carried out.

6. From the outset Members were committed to work with emergency services to understand issues and seek potential outcomes to reduce demand. It is accepted that there is no one solution or 'quick fix' to reduce demand and this is further exacerbated by a reduction in available resources.
7. The review's key findings focus on education and campaigns, affordability, availability, drink driving limits and information sharing that identify recommendations of which if implemented at either a local or national level may contribute to a reduction in demand. Locally, a number of these recommendations are for consideration by the Safe Durham Partnership Board. It is also hoped that work undertaken by the Committee will assist and provide support to the delivery of the Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

### **Service Response**

8. Public Health fully endorses the findings of the Alcohol and its Demand on Emergency Services report. The ongoing work of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group is key to utilising a partnership approach to address the impact of alcohol on emergency services and respond positively to the recommendations. The report also provides further evidence for the need to continue to invest in the prevention agenda, which aligns with the County Durham NHS Health Check programme and the Identification and Brief Advice (IBA) delivered through GP Practices and local pharmacies in County Durham.

### **Recommendations**

9. Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations in the report attached (appendix 2, page 8) and to formulate a response within the six month period identified in the report for systematic review of the recommendations.
10. That the scrutiny review report on Alcohol and its Demand on Emergency Services is presented to the Safe Durham Partnership Board.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance – None**

**Staffing – None**

**Risk – None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None**

**Accommodation - None**

**Crime and Disorder –** The report includes information that aims to contribute to reducing Crime and Disorder and alcohol related harm within the Altogether Safer element of the Council Plan and Safe Durham Partnership Plan.

**Human Rights – None**

**Consultation – None**

**Procurement – None**

**Disability Issues – None**

**Legal Implications – None.**