

# SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE ON ALCOHOL

## KEY FACTS

- Between 15,000 and 22,000 deaths each year are associated with alcohol misuse, mainly resulting from stroke, cancer, liver disease, accidental injury or suicide.
- Around 1 million children live in families where one or both parents misuse alcohol.
- 5.9 million people in England drink above the Government's recommended daily guidelines on some occasions.
- Around 25% of children aged 11–15 drink alcohol, and they drink an average of around 10 units per week.
- 360,000 incidents of domestic violence are linked to alcohol misuse, around a third of all domestic violence.
- Half of all violent crimes are alcohol-related.
- Up to 17 million days absent from work are alcohol-related.
- Alcohol misuse is associated with 150,000 hospital admissions each year. Around 70% of A&E attendances between midnight and 5am on weekend nights are alcohol-related.
- The loss to the economy of premature death from alcohol misuse is around £2.4 billion each year.

### Inequalities exist

- Research has found a high prevalence of alcohol dependency amongst single homeless people – and that the severity of dependency worsens with housing circumstance with the highest levels (50%) amongst rough sleepers
- An estimated 25% of drug misusers also misuse alcohol.

## WE ARE NOW GOING TO...

### Health in the consumer society

- Work with the Portman Group to cut down binge drinking, including a new information campaign.
- Work with industry to develop a voluntary social responsibility scheme for alcohol producers and retailers. This would aim to protect young people by placing information on alcohol containers and in alcohol retail outlets, including reminders about responsible drinking on alcohol advertisements, checking identification and refusing to sell alcohol to people who are under 18.
- Support action by OFCOM to strengthen the rules of broadcast advertising of alcohol, particularly to protect the under-18s.

### A health-promoting NHS

Build on the commitments within Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy England through:

- Invest to improve services to help the NHS tackle alcohol problems at an early stage, with a focus in the next year on:
  - guidance and training to ensure all health professionals are able to identify alcohol problems early;
  - piloting approaches to targeted screening and brief intervention in both primary care and hospital settings, including A&E departments;
  - similar initiatives in criminal justice settings; and

- developing a programme to improve alcohol treatment services.

These initiatives will be supported, from April 2006, through additional funding provided through the Pooled Treatment Budget for Substance Misuse.

Health Development Agency evidence briefings summarise evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to promote health, and include *Prevention and Reduction of Alcohol Misuse* (2003)

([www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/eb\\_summaryalcohol.pdf](http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/eb_summaryalcohol.pdf))

## WHAT THE CONSULTATION RAISED

The major themes raised in consultation responses on alcohol were improved information on health and risks, concern with anti-social behaviour, and young people drinking. Other themes raised included better enforcement of restrictions on underage sales, taxation, binge drinking, alcopops, drink driving, licensing, restricting advertising and increasing treatment.

## WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

- The Government's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy ([www.strategy.gov.uk/output/Page3669.asp](http://www.strategy.gov.uk/output/Page3669.asp)) (March 2004) is the first coordinated strategy on alcohol misuse in England. The Department of Health and the Home Office are jointly responsible for its implementation. The strategy includes measures to change attitudes to irresponsible drinking and behaviour, including:
  - making the sensible drinking message easier to understand and apply;
  - targeting messages at groups such as binge drinkers and chronic drinkers;
  - providing better information for consumers, on products and at the point of sale;
  - providing alcohol education in schools to change attitudes and behaviour, informed by the findings of the 'Blueprint' research;
  - providing more support and advice for employers.

- Ofcom has recently reviewed the code of practice for TV advertising to ensure that it does not target young drinkers or glamorise irresponsible behaviour.
- Education on alcohol and its effects forms part of the national curriculum for science and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).
- The Department of Health produces leaflets and other resources for children and young people on the dangers of misusing alcohol, including material on the web such as [www.wrecked.co.uk](http://www.wrecked.co.uk) and [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com).
- The Government recommends that all employers should have a workplace alcohol policy to provide guidance to managers and staff on alcohol-related problems in the workplace.

## WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF...

...we reduce alcohol-related harm.