



# **Embedding the Alcohol Free Childhood vision in local licensing processes**

## **A briefing for elected members and others engaged in local licensing processes**

**2022**

# Outline – briefing at a glance

- Alcohol is a harmful product
- Alcohol use is a problem in the North East
- Children in the North East are vulnerable to alcohol harm
- Reduce availability = reduce harm
- More people are drinking at home – making it easier for children to access alcohol
- The public support the protection of children from alcohol harm
- The North East supports an Alcohol Free Childhood
- The Licensing Act 2003 promotes the protection of children from harm
- The Alcohol Free Childhood vision can be embedded in local licensing processes
- Is your local authority taking an alcohol free childhood approach to licensing?



# Alcohol is a harmful product

Alcohol is a factor in over 60 health conditions, including at least 7 different types of cancer

It is the leading risk factor for ill-health, early mortality and disability among 15-49 year olds

The average age of those dying from an alcohol-specific cause is 54.

People from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to drink than the unemployed BUT harms to health are more likely to be experienced by lower socioeconomic groups

The over-45s are 3 times more likely to drink alcohol every day than younger people.



# Alcohol use is a problem in the North East

We have:

- The worst alcohol-related health problems in England
- The highest rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions
- Higher-than-average rates of deaths from alcohol

Alcohol use costs society £1 billion every year, including costs relating to crime, health services, lost productivity etc. This is equivalent to a cost of £368 per person per year.

Balance was launched 2009 and is commissioned by local authorities in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham to lead a multi-strand, evidence-based programme, including close engagement on the licensing agenda.

# Children in the North East are vulnerable to alcohol harm

The advice of the Chief Medical Officer is for children to have an entirely alcohol free childhood at least up until the age 18. However:

- 16,500 children in the North East drink on a regular basis (at least once a week)
- The proportion of boys who drank alcohol in the last week has fallen – from 12% in 2016 to 9% in 2018
- BUT the proportion for girls has increased, from 12% to 14%
- Children whose parents allow them to drink alcohol are four times more likely to go on to become ‘at risk’ drinkers
- Alcohol misuse is estimated to be involved in between a quarter and third of child abuse cases
- Concern about parental drinking is the number one reason that children contact ChildLine, with over 5,300 children doing so per year – more than 100 per week

# Reduce availability = reduce harm

- Strong correlation between availability, affordability and consumption – the more available & affordable alcohol is, the more people drink
- Evidence shows that controlling price and availability are two of the most effective ways of reducing consumption
- Almost 8,000 premises are licensed to sell alcohol in the NE – one of the highest regional outlet densities in the country
- Alcohol is available 24/7, 365 days of the year, in locations including petrol stations and soft play areas
- Alcohol is hugely accessible - services such as 'Dial-a-Drink', deliver alcohol straight to your front door throughout the night

# More people are drinking at home – making it easier for children to access alcohol

- In 1974, 90% of beer consumed in the UK sold by the ‘on-trade.’
- In 2014, for the first time, beer sales in the off-trade (50.5%) exceeded those in the on-trade (49.5%)
- This indicates that people are increasingly choosing to drink at home.
- Off-licenses are the predominant source of alcohol for under-18s, with growing international evidence linking off-license density with a range of negative alcohol-related consequences





# The public support the protection of children from alcohol harm

51% think the government should be doing more to tackle alcohol related issues. Only 5% say that the government is doing too much.

71% support a legal requirement for labelling information on underage drinking

75% support measures to limit children and young people's exposure to alcohol advertising

79% support controls to limit the exposure of children to alcohol advertising on social media sites

62% of North East adults agree with Chief Medical Officer's guidelines that states 'An alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option'





# The North East supports an Alcohol Free Childhood

Local authorities in the North East of England has adopted a vision of working towards an alcohol free childhood for every child growing up in the region to help de-normalise alcohol in families and communities so they can have the best start in life.

This is a vision that every child can grow up:

- free from the impact of other peoples' drinking
- free from commercial, social and environmental pressure to drink
- free from health and social harms caused by drinking alcohol themselves
- supported and encouraged to make heathy positive lifestyle choices as they enter adulthood.



# The Licensing Act 2003 promotes the protection of children from harm

Four objectives to promote:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- The prevention of public nuisance
- The protection of children from harm

This covers, among other issues:

- The sale of alcohol to children
- The purchase of alcohol by or on behalf of children
- The consumption of alcohol by children
- Delivering alcohol to children
- The prohibition of unsupervised sales by children

Key question: how can local licensing processes support the vision of an Alcohol Free Childhood?

# The Alcohol Free Childhood vision can be embedded in local licensing processes

As part of the service level agreement between Balance and its commissioning local authorities in Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland and Durham, we are providing a toolkit to support colleagues in implementing an Alcohol Free Childhood approach to local licensing processes.



# Is your local authority taking an alcohol free childhood approach to licensing?

1. Is there specific reference to an Alcohol Free Childhood within your local Statement of Licensing Policy?

- Key message to communicate: The Chief Medical Officer's guidelines state that an alcohol-free childhood until the age of 18 is the healthiest and best option

2. Does your local authority adopt a strategic partnership approach to the fourth licensing objective of protecting children from harm?

- Are Children's Services engaged in licensing discussions? If not, can they be? If they are, to what extent are they involved?



# Is your local authority taking an alcohol free childhood approach to licensing?

3. Is the availability of alcohol – location and time – recognised within the licensing process as a key driver in alcohol related harm among children?

- What opportunities exist to engage with licensees around the harms of alcohol to children, particularly with reference to the CMO's guidelines on an alcohol free childhood?



# Is your local authority taking an alcohol free childhood approach to licensing?

4. Are licensed premises asked to adopt specific measures to support an Alcohol Free Childhood approach?

- Examples include agreements not to advertise alcohol externally e.g. on windows; restrictions on product placement within stores

5. Are safeguards in place to ensure that there is no inadvertent promotion of alcohol industry objectives within the local licensing process?

- The objectives of the alcohol industry directly conflict with the objectives of public health.
- Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAPs) are industry-funded and motivated



For more information on  
embedding an Alcohol Free Childhood approach within  
local alcohol licensing processes  
or for any other alcohol related queries  
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