BALANCE
Reducing alcohol harm

BULLETIN

Edition 6 | October 2026

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Welcome to the October edition of the Balance E-Bulletin. As we move into autumn, alcohol harms continue to place significant pressure on individuals, families and public services across the North East. This month, we highlight opportunities to drive positive change through policy, partnership working, research and lived experience.

The Month Ahead

Budget 26: The October Autumn budget statement gives us the chance to shine a light on the levels of alcohol harm impacting families, communities and public services across the North East. Balance has submitted a statement to the Treasury, outlining our calls for alcohol duty on non-draught alcohol products to increase by 2% above inflation and acknowledging that many of the harms in our region are being driven by cheap, shop-bought alcohol.

Pricing measures that help reduce alcohol harm while generating revenue for public services benefit everyone. Increasing duty on cheap, high-strength alcohol remains one of the most effective ways to reduce health inequalities and alcohol-related harm. This measure alone is enough to fund and sustain the salaries of over 35,000 nurses. Find out more about our key asks here.



A reminder that the Alcohol Health Alliance's campaign calling for action is also live.

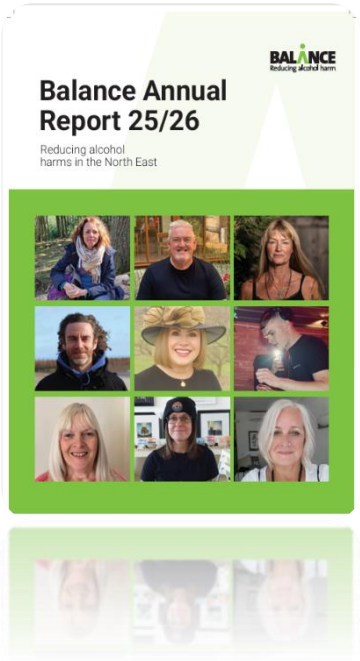
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New Developments

Celebrating a Year of Progress: Balance Annual Highlights Published.
We are delighted to have published the Balance Annual Highlights 2025/26 report. Thank you to all our funders and partners for supporting us in delivering so much during this exceptionally busy and productive year.

Over the last year, Balance delivered campaigns, partnerships, evidence and advocacy reaching thousands of people and stakeholders across the North East and beyond. Balance has worked tirelessly with a wide range partners across the region, nationally and internationally to raise awareness of alcohol harm, challenge the normalisation of alcohol, support evidence-based policy, and help address the multiple harms from alcohol.

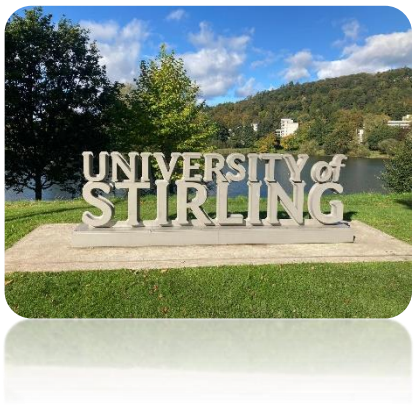
Highlights from 2025/26 include
✅ Delivering impactful public awareness campaigns, including Alcohol is Toxic and What's the Harm?
✅ Sharing lived experience stories to raise awareness that alcohol causes cancer and other serious health conditions
✅ Supporting partners with evidence, insight and communications expertise
✅ Amplifying the voices of healthcare professionals, communities and people with lived experience
✅ Advocating and working with national partners for policies that can reduce alcohol-related harm and improve public health outcomes



In this short video, Ailsa Rutter, OBE Director of Fresh and Balance, introduces the report and reflects on what has been achieved through partnership working over the last 12 months.
Watch it here.

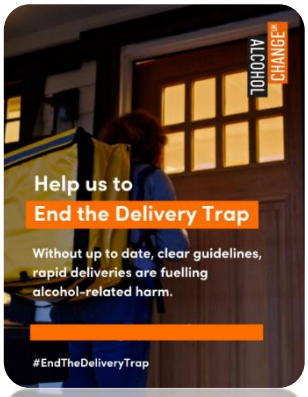
You can also read the full report on our website here.

Latest Alcohol Research and Policy Insights Shared at Stirling Conference
Balance was delighted to attend an excellent 2-day Alcohol Research event at Stirling University at the start of October, showcasing the latest research initiatives from the UK and beyond, and exploring how they might apply policy and practice. The event provided valuable insight into emerging evidence, helping inform future approaches to reducing alcohol-related harm and supporting healthier communities.



From excellent debates on the role of the pub in modern British society to the evidence base around implementation frameworks for public health policy, the event covered a myriad of topics and learning will inform the future development of the Balance programme approach.

Growing Concerns Over Rapid Online Alcohol Deliveries
Following extensive work to highlight the growing challenge of rapid online alcohol deliveries, Balance hosted a 'lunchtime learning' webinar on the excellent Alcohol Change UK campaign, 'End the Delivery Trap'.
Richard Piper, ACUK's Chief Executive, explained how services like Uber Eats, Tesco Whoosh, and Deliveroo have changed how we buy and consume alcohol, whilst the legal systems designed to keep people safe (including the Licensing Act) have not kept up in the era of the app.



With around 1 in 5 people (22%) using rapid delivery services to order alcohol at least weekly, Richard updated the audience on the key asks from the campaign, including stricter regulations on delivery apps and mandatory age and intoxication checks, to mitigate harms, and the weight of support building. Rapid alcohol delivery services can undermine efforts to reduce harm by making alcohol available within minutes, including to people attempting to cut down or recover from alcohol dependence. Find out more about the campaign here.

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In The News

New Health Foundation Tracker Highlights Lack of Progress on Alcohol



The Health Foundation has released a new Policy Tracker, which reviews the ambition and progress of policies across government that shape our health, with summaries of key policies and ratings for 14 policy areas. While there is scrutiny of the many individual policy areas that contribute to health – from housing to employment – it can be difficult to see the whole picture. The aim of this policy tracker is to help fill that gap, by describing and assessing the policy areas that affect health, to understand

both the scale of the government's ambitions and what progress has been made on delivery. Sadly, the tracker rated ambition and progress on alcohol as low, and this strengthens the evidence base supporting calls for action on alcohol harm– Health across government – policy tracker | The Health Foundation.

Samantha's story
Alcohol addiction nearly cost Samantha Morgan her life. So, when she received a can of cider she hadn't requested in an online food delivery, she decided to speak up. "No one checked whether alcohol was welcome in my home," Samantha says. "It was simply sent."



What followed was a national conversation - recognising the pressures that people who have struggled with alcohol are facing every day. We're proud to have worked alongside Samantha to help shine a light on an issue that often goes unnoticed. Through her personal experience and her Not Everyone Drinks campaign, which she founded and leads, she has been raising awareness and challenging assumptions about alcohol in everyday life.

Her story reminds us that people choose not to drink for many reasons, including health, recovery, faith, culture and personal preference. By working together with partners across the alcohol harm and recovery sector, we're helping ensure these voices are heard and encouraging a wider conversation about alcohol's place in our everyday lives.

Samantha's experience also highlights how assumptions around drinking can unintentionally create barriers for those in recovery.

Read Samantha's story here.

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Spotlight

Paul's story
For many years, alcohol gradually took control of Paul's life.
The 47-year-old from Sunderland had built a successful career in broadcasting, ran his own business and became a father, but behind the scenes his drinking was causing increasing damage to his relationships, health and future. Despite

knowing alcohol was a problem, he struggled to stop and eventually lost opportunities, friendships and almost his relationship with his son.



Now more than ten years alcohol-free, Paul says recovery gave him far more than sobriety. It helped him rebuild his life, strengthen family relationships and become the husband, son, and dad he always wanted to be. Today, he shares his story to encourage others to know that change is possible, and that support is available, whatever stage they are at in their journey. Read Paul's full story here.

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Upcoming Events

Balance is in the process of planning future 'Lunchtime Learning' sessions on key issues identified as system priorities, such as the role of alcohol in Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and alcohol and synergistic risk factors. Keep an eye out for more details shortly!

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