BALANCE
Reducing alcohol harm

BULLETIN

Edition 7 | November 2026

Overview of Edition

1. The Month Ahead
2. New Developments
3. In The News
4. Spotlight
5. Upcoming Events

Welcome to the November edition of the E-Bulletin

This month we highlight the challenges that Christmas can present for people in alcohol recovery, share our latest Annual Highlights report, explore new research on alcohol and cancer, and look ahead to upcoming events including our alcohol labelling webinar and January campaign activity.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support in reducing alcohol harms across the North East.

The Month Ahead

With the festive season just around the corner, it's important to acknowledge that December can be a particularly challenging time for people in alcohol recovery. While alcohol is heavily promoted throughout the year, the run-up to Christmas often sees even greater exposure through supermarket displays, end-of-aisle promotions and multi-buy offers. For people working hard to maintain their

recovery, these constant reminders can make the festive period especially difficult.

People with lived experience, like Karen from Newcastle, say Christmas can present additional challenges. Karen explains: "It's a really challenging time of year when you walk into your local supermarket and you're surrounded by alcohol stacked high from the entrance through to the end-of-aisle promotions."

Alongside increased alcohol marketing, Christmas parties, family gatherings and New Year's Eve celebrations can add social pressure and temptation. For some, the festive season can also bring feelings of loneliness, grief, financial stress or difficult family dynamics, all of which may trigger cravings or a desire to use alcohol as a coping mechanism.



Shorter days and changes to normal routines can also contribute to low mood and isolation.

Recognising these challenges in advance can help people protect their recovery. Planning alcohol-free activities, staying connected with supportive friends, family members or recovery networks, and prioritising self-care can make a real difference. Taking small, positive steps and reaching out for support when needed can help people navigate the festive season while staying focused on their recovery goals. You can access help and support here

Watch Karen's video here

North East Public Health Conference 2026: Sue Taylor, Head of Alcohol Policy at Balance, will be presenting at the North East Public Health Conference on 7 December. Her rapid-fire presentation will outline the key findings from the joint Balance with the Institute of Alcohol Studies report into views from Publicans. We look forward to seeing colleagues at this. Read more here

Back to Overview

New Developments

Balance Annual Highlights 2025/26: Thank you to all our funders and partners for supporting us in delivering so much during this exceptionally busy and productive year.



We worked with a wide range of 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.

You can also read the full report on our website here

January Resources Available Now : January is a peak time for New Year healthy intentions, including cutting down on or cutting out alcohol. We will be running more Alcohol is Toxic activity in time for January and have resources available to partners including digital screens, social posts and posters. They're available to download from our Resources section on ReducemyRisk.tv



Back to Overview

In The News

New Lancet Study on alcohol and cancer: A new Lancet Regional Health – Americas study analysing more than three decades of US data found that alcohol-attributable cancer deaths more than doubled between 1990 and 2023, with researchers suggesting that even around one standard drink per day may increase the risk of dying from several cancers.

The study linked alcohol to increased mortality from cancers including the breast, colorectum, liver, stomach, pancreas, prostate, and head and neck. Researchers found colorectal cancer was the leading alcohol-attributable cancer killer among men aged 20-54 and the second leading cause among women of the same age group, while breast cancer was the leading alcohol-attributable cancer death among women, giving further rationale to support the Balance 'Alcohol is Toxic' awareness raising campaign.

Domestic abuse, sexual assault and child abuse A new report from the Institute of Alcohol Studies highlights the large and growing body of literature that suggests alcohol is a major contributing factor to domestic abuse and sexual assault and is consistently found in a high proportion of those who perpetuate it. Alcohol can also contribute to children experiencing significant emotional and physical abuse, violence, and neglect from parents and caregivers. However, the effects of alcohol are complex: there is also evidence that victims of long-term domestic abuse may use alcohol to cope with the abuse.

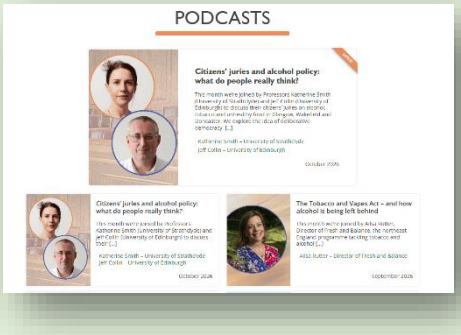
Back to Overview

Spotlight

Institute of Alcohol Studies Podcasts In October, the Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) shared an excellent podcast with Professors Katherine Smith (University of Strathclyde) and Jeff Collin (University of Edinburgh) to discuss their citizens' juries on alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food in Glasgow, Wakefield and Doncaster.

The podcast explored the idea of deliberative democracy, why citizens' juries can produce very different results from traditional public opinion polling, and what happens when members of the public are given time, evidence and space to consider complex public health issues.

It discussed the striking findings that emerged from the juries, including widespread concern about the pervasiveness of alcohol marketing, strong support for greater action on alcohol harm, and the near absence of the 'nanny state' arguments that often dominate political and media debates. You can listen to the podcast and other excellent episodes, including a recent one from our Director, Ailsa Rutter, here



Back to Overview

Upcoming Events

Balance Lunchtime Learning Webinar – Alcohol Labelling: The latest in our series of Balance 'Lunchtime Learning' sessions, will feature Sheila Gilheany, the CEO of Alcohol Action Ireland, sharing practical lessons from Ireland around how we can advance alcohol labelling and resist alcohol industry influence. This is a particularly pertinent discussion for us in the UK, as the Government is expected to consult on the commitment to mandatory alcohol labels in the coming months.

The webinar will take place on Thursday 3rd December 2026 from 12.30pm-1.30pm and you can register **here**



The webinar will explore how cancer warning labels can raise awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer and reduce alcohol harm. Sheila will share extensive learning and latest policy developments from the labelling experience in Ireland, including a focus on effective advocacy strategies, tactics for mitigating alcohol industry influence and how local partners and stakeholders can support the overall policy process.



Alcohol and Violence Against Women Webinar: European partners are joining forces with WHO / Europe to hold a webinar Alcohol and Violence Against Women, on Tuesday 1st December 2026. The discussion is a part of WHO/Europe's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign (25 November-10 December). Featuring

The programme brings together a high-level group of speakers and panellists, including, but not limited to, MEP Alessandra Moretti, Professor Gail Gilchrist (King's College, London), MEP Aurelijus Veryga, Ms Lisa Collste (European Commission, DG JUST), and Dr Carina Ferreira-Borges (WHO/Europe).

REGISTER FOR THE EVENT HERE

Back to Overview

Join The Conversation

On Facebook at www.facebook.com/balance.northeast
On Linkedin at www.linkedin.com/fresh-and-balance
On YouTube at www.youtube.com/@BalanceNE