

# Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2011

## Key Messages

### Introduction – alcohol and its impact on health and our local communities

- Alcohol misuse is one of our most serious public health challenges in Wales, affecting individual health outcomes and local communities, through its effect on families and wider issues such as crime
- People living in disadvantage have poorer alcohol-related health outcomes, highlighting a health inequality that needs to be tackled
- Alcohol misuse has an impact on use of health services
- There is a clear policy focus in Wales on tackling the health and wider harms associated with alcohol misuse

### Availability and consumption of alcohol

#### *Making alcohol less affordable*

- Alcohol is much more affordable now than thirty years ago and it has also become more available – it is sold in more places for longer hours
- Price control and regulation enforcement are two of the strongest measures which influence the pattern of alcohol consumption in the population, and hence associated alcohol-related harm
- The UK Government has already put in place measures to increase alcohol taxation
- The UK Government's new alcohol strategy plans to introduce a minimum unit price (MUP), anticipated to be 40p per unit of alcohol
- Welsh Government has been consistently supportive of a MUP, and should consider calling on UK Government to set the MUP at 50p, given the increased effect on decreasing alcohol consumption

#### *Controlling how readily available alcohol is*

- Effective licensing enforcement has an impact on drinking behaviour and failure to enforce the law leads to higher levels of alcohol consumption in the population
- The Police Reform and Social Responsibility reforms introduce a range of changes to the Licensing Act 2003 and can be used to reduce harm from alcohol-related crime and alcohol misuse
- Local Health Boards and Licensing Authorities as new 'responsible authorities' must make best use of their ability to influence licensing applications and reviews

#### *Age restriction and alcohol*

There is a need for the two local authorities and Police basic command units to:

- Maintain current test-purchasing operations whilst broadening regulation into different supply sectors such as late night and twenty-four hour supply businesses
- Alongside the Home Office work on alcohol-sales, to use the penalties available for persistently selling alcohol to children
- Provide education and training to the licensed trade about the changes in the Licensing Act

### Developing a safe and sustainable night time economy

- In both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan the local authorities, Police, health, licensees and other partners have established effective measures to control and reduce the potential harm from alcohol in the night time economy, but there is more to do
- In Cardiff further progress can be made by implementing recommendations from the Council's Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee report
- Participation of Cardiff and Vale partnerships in the national work to capture all the activity taking place locally to help ensure a safe night time economy (the 'due diligence' exercise) will provide a useful baseline against which future prioritised delivery can be developed
- Implementing additional powers in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act will enhance the ability to proactively manage the local night time economies across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan



# Harm reduction

## ***Screening and brief interventions***

- Alcohol screening and brief interventions are effective, quick to deliver, and can help people take control of their drinking at an early stage before serious health harm occurs
- The new Alcohol Brief Interventions training courses must be delivered to key staff across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The training is free and can be delivered in as little as 1.5 hours
- A simple but robust system for recording and monitoring the outcome of routine alcohol interventions must be developed and implemented

## ***Action to reduce harm to individuals drinking to excess in the Cardiff night time economy***

- A number of effective schemes are in place to reduce the risk of harm to those who misuse alcohol in the night time economy
- The University Health Board must support the setting up of an alcohol recovery centre in the centre of Cardiff
- In view of the high number of children brought in by StaySafe because of alcohol, StaySafe staff must be trained to deliver alcohol brief interventions

## ***Drink driving***

- The decline in road deaths and accidents from drink driving is a powerful demonstration of the impact of legislation combined with public awareness campaigns
- Welsh Government should lobby the UK Government to reduce the legal blood alcohol limit for driving to 50mg in the short term, with a longer-term goal of reducing the limit to zero

## ***Alcohol policies in the workplace***

- Alcohol misuse damages health at work and productivity, impacting on the UK economy
- The Welsh Government Corporate Health Standard and Small Workplace Health Award provide a framework for workplace health improvement, including addressing alcohol misuse
- The local Employers' Network should prioritise implementation of alcohol policies in line with Welsh Government and Health and Safety Executive guidance, and introduce alcohol brief intervention training for occupational health, employee support and trades union staff
- All public employers within Cardiff and the Vale should participate in the Corporate Health Standard including adoption of an alcohol policy in line with best practice

## ***Health education and personal skills development programmes for children and young people***

- There is health improvement activity in most schools across Cardiff and the Vale, but there are varying levels of substance misuse support to schools
- Substance misuse education and advice services should be reviewed and extended across both counties
- The Strengthening Families Programme and Universities programme should be taken forward if they are shown to be effective

# Changing attitudes

## ***Regulation of alcohol advertising and sponsorship***

- Alcohol advertising and promotion is a multi-million pound industry which influences the drinking behaviour of adults and young people
- Cardiff and Vale partnerships should join together to actively lobby the Welsh and UK Governments for action to restrict alcohol advertising and promotion

## ***Mass media public campaigns***

- Mass media campaigns have a role to play as part of a wider, comprehensive approach to a particular health issue
- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board should revise its alcohol campaign programme in line with the national approach
- Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan local authorities and members of the Employers' Network should also support the national campaign



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