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Dear Mr Greening

National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy Consultation Document

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our views on the formulation of the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

We fully support the need for a comprehensive national alcohol harm reduction strategy that is focused on reducing the excessive consumption of alcohol and hence reducing the unacceptable consequences of alcohol misuse.

In response to the issues raised in the Consultation Document we would make the following points:

Targeted Approach

- The focus of the strategy should be to reduce consumption by those who currently misuse alcohol by drinking to excess, and should not seek to penalise or impose restrictions on the vast majority of Britons who drink in moderation.
- In defining what level of consumption constitutes alcohol misuse the strategy needs to take into account that the gender, build, and lifestyle of an individual will have a significant bearing on the level of consumption that should be considered excessive.

The Sensible Drinking Message

- The sensible drinking message needs to make the dangers of binge drinking clear. Binge drinking is the key cause of alcohol related disorder and there is a clear consensus that binge drinking is especially harmful to an individual's health.

- One weakness of the unit based system is that people often “save up” their units for a single occasion. It is therefore important that greater emphasis is placed on the dangers of binge drinking in this way.
- The consumption of alcohol in licensed premises is less likely to lead to excessive alcohol consumption than consumption in an uncontrolled social environment. The sensible drinking message should reflect the benefits of alcohol consumption in licensed premises, such as the pub.

Education

- In the medium to long term education through schools, workplaces and the media has the potential to create a more responsible drinking culture.
- Education about the use of alcohol should reflect that alcohol in moderation is a beneficial part of a healthy lifestyle.
- We believe that people should be encouraged to consume alcohol in socially controlled environments such as the pub, because this is the best way to reduce the risk of alcohol misuse.

Alcohol Smuggling

- We believe that the only effective way to tackle the illegal sale of smuggled alcohol, often to underage drinkers, is to reduce Britain’s excise rates in order to eliminate the smugglers profit.

If you require any further information please contact us. We look forward to the outcome of the consultation with interest.

Yours Sincerely

Jonathan Mail
Public Affairs Manager