



press release

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North West health campaigners welcome new government measures to tackle irresponsible alcohol promotions

North West health campaigners Our Life today welcomed new government measures to tackle irresponsible and excessive alcohol promotions and alcohol-related crime and disorder.

The measures announced today, part of a new mandatory code for alcohol retailers, follow a government-backed national consultation which received more than 7,000 responses from the public, industry, voluntary organisations, police and local authorities. The measures include: -

- Banning irresponsible drinks promotions;
- Banning pouring drinks directly into the mouths of customers;
- Ensuring free tap water for customers;
- Ensuring all those who sell alcohol have an age verification policy in place requiring them ask anyone who looks under 18 for identification; and
- Ensuring that all on-trade premises offer small measures of beers, wine and spirits to customers.

Our Life chief executive Dr Alison Giles said: "When we consulted people in the North West about the mandatory code, we found strong public support for effective measures to tackle alcohol harm. Over 3,500 people across the North West signed up to support a new code of practice for alcohol retailers that will put a stop to the most dangerous drinks promotions such as "all you can drink for a tenner", speed drinking competitions and "nights of mayhem".

When Our Life surveyed people in the North West last year they found that over 53% of respondents supported the banning of irresponsible drinks promotions and 78% agreed that the alcohol unit content of drinks should be provided as standard at points of sale. 91% of respondents thought that free tap water should always be available in bars, pubs and clubs and 59% wanted to see smaller measures provided. Over 83% of respondents were also worried about the impact of alcohol on children and young people.

“We welcome the measures announced today and believe that they will help to address public concern about irresponsible alcohol sales and alcohol-related crime and disorder,” said Dr Giles. “We particularly welcome the government’s intention to introduce new powers for licensing authorities, allowing them to call reviews of problem premises and restrict or remove their licence without having to wait for the police or local residents to complain,” she said.

Our Life criticised the new mandatory code for not addressing bulk discounting, something that it has been campaigning on across the North West. “It’s disappointing that the government has not brought forward any measures to tackle the role of the supermarkets who continue to act irresponsibly by selling alcohol at pocket-money prices. We want to see a minimum price of 50p a unit for alcohol to address this as it is widely accepted that such a step would save lives,” said Dr Giles. “Bargain prices in the supermarkets can mean huge bills for the taxpayer as the NHS and the police have to sort out the mess. The financial cost of alcohol-related harm to the NHS in the North West is in excess of £400 million per year,” said Dr Giles.

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For further information contact Andy Walker, Head of Corporate Affairs, Our Life, on 0161 237 2031 or 07818 568573 or email andy.walker@ourlife.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. Our Life is a campaigning organisation working with individuals and organisations who want to achieve the real and lasting changes that will make the North West a healthier place to live.

2. Established as a social enterprise, Our Life offers creative ways for the NHS, local government, the public, business and voluntary organisations to work in partnership to make sure that the North West becomes one of the healthiest regions in the country.
3. The North West has one the worst drinking levels in the country for people drinking at hazardous or harmful levels (1.33 million adults). In the North West, one person is admitted to hospital every seven minutes for an alcohol-related condition. The financial cost of alcohol-related harm to NHS North West is estimated to be in excess of £400 million per year.
4. According to *The Big Drink Debate* findings, nearly 50% of people in the North West avoided their town centres at night because of the drunken behaviour of others.
5. The North West has almost seven million inhabitants and 230,000 companies. Its economy is worth a remarkable £106 billion. Despite this, the North West has one of the worst health records in the country. A boy born in the region might expect to live ten years younger than one born in the South East of the country.