



## **Media statement**

### **PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGN WELCOMES ALCOHOL ANNOUNCEMENT BUT THINKS GOVERNMENT COULD GO FURTHER**

Our Life, a North West regional health programme, has welcomed the Government's plans to tackle irresponsible drink deals but says it could go further.

Eighty per cent of the 30,000 people who responded to Our Life's 'Big Drink Debate' – the largest survey on alcohol ever undertaken in the North West – said that low prices and discounts increased the amount of alcohol people drink.

The Big Drink Debate is the first health initiative from Our Life and was launched to find out about the role alcohol plays and the affect it has on people in the North West.

Dr. Alison Giles, Director of Our Life, said: "Restricting certain drinks promotions is a great step forward in helping us all to drink within sensible limits. However, the government has missed an opportunity to support some of our most vulnerable citizens by prohibiting all drinks promotions and setting a minimum price per unit of alcohol.

"We know that our young people and our heaviest drinkers are influenced by low prices and yet these new measures mean it is still possible to buy five units of alcohol for the price of a fizzy soft drink. We urge the Government to look at this issue as a matter of urgency.

"The Big Drink Debate survey found that 60% of respondents buy their alcohol in supermarkets, so the measures announced today will go some way towards helping consumers drink within safe limits.

"However, supermarkets will still be able to offer low prices on bottles and cans and to use alcohol as a loss-leader. Setting a minimum price per unit of alcohol would help prevent alcohol being used in an irresponsible way to lure in customers and would impact on the price of beer and cider, known to be two of the drinks most regularly consumed by young people and heavy drinkers."

ENDS

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## NOTES TO EDITOR

1. If a minimum price per unit of 40p was set, the price of a 2L bottle of cider (5.3 ABV, 10.6 units) would increase from around £2 to £4.24. A bottle of 13% wine would retail at £3.90 and gin at £15.00.
2. 30,000 people responded to the Big Drink Debate survey between May and the end of August 2008.
3. Our Life has been established to unite individuals and organisations to work together to create, challenge or change the significant policies and business practices that have influence over people's behaviour, health and well-being in the North West.
4. The first campaign for Our Life is The Big Drink Debate - to find out how people in the North West feel about their health and what their views are on alcohol;
5. The Big Drink Debate was funded by Our Life, the Department of Health and Government Office North West.
6. The North West has the worst drinking levels in the country for people drinking at hazardous or harmful levels;
7. Deaths from alcohol-related causes have doubled in a generation;
8. In the North West, around 43,000 men and 28,000 women are admitted to hospital every year for an alcohol-related condition. That's around one person every seven minutes;
9. More than 73,000 recorded crimes across the North West last year were related to alcohol – of these 50,000 were violent offences;
10. The estimated costs of alcohol-related and alcohol specific crime in England is £12billion;
11. The most deprived 20% of people in the North West suffer the effects of alcohol the most;