

Press Release



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Tory proposals to tackle availability of cheap booze need to go further to be effective says North West health campaign group

North West wellbeing and health campaign group Our Life has given a cautious welcome to new Conservative proposals to tackle the availability of cheap booze that fuels alcohol-related violence, but says that the measures need to go further to be truly effective in tackling the problem of alcohol harm.

Speaking today at the Conservatives' annual conference in Manchester, shadow home secretary Chris Grayling announced an extension of the power of councils to restrict pub and club opening hours; promised a crackdown on late night, problem premises who would have to pay more for their alcohol licence to fund policing and also outlined proposals to ban cheap supermarket drink deals and raise the price of super-strength lager and cider.

Commenting on Grayling's proposals, Our Life chief executive Dr Alison Giles said: "We are pleased that Chris Grayling recognises that it is too easy to get very drunk quickly and cheaply and we welcome his clear statement that 'there are times when it's right to put the interests of communities ahead of the interests of business'.

However, Dr Giles questioned Chris Grayling's targeting of super-strength beers and ciders for price hikes as a way to address alcohol-related violence. "If by 'super-strength' drinks, Chris Grayling means ciders containing more than 5.6% alcohol and beers containing more than 5.9%, cited by David Cameron earlier this year, then Our Life believes that this is wide of the mark," said Dr Giles.

"We need a pricing and taxation regime that encourages lower ABV production and consumption - so why not set the threshold at 4%?" asked Dr Giles. "Very few drinks are super strength and the majority of deals are on standard strength lagers and ciders which are widely sold by supermarkets at pocket-money prices," Dr Giles said.

“Chris Grayling’s announcements today show that the Conservative Party now recognises that there is a clear link between the low price of alcohol and over-consumption,” Dr Giles said. “We welcome that recognition. It is an important step in tackling alcohol-related harm, but any price increases need to be carefully targeted to ensure that they go far enough to stem the rising tide of public order and health harms caused by the availability of cheap alcohol.”

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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.
4. More than 73,000 recorded crimes across the North West last year were related to alcohol – of these 50,000 were violent offences. The estimated costs of alcohol-related and alcohol specific crime in England is £12 billion.