



ALCOHOL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

Year in review

2021-2022



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A word from our Chair

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK.

In 2007, during my tenure as President for the Royal College of Physicians, I knew I wanted to do something to address the hidden harms of alcohol in society which I had witnessed every day in my role as a liver specialist. With this in mind, the AHA began.

There have been many great strides forward to improve public health in recent decades; with policies in place to protect people from the harm inflicted by cigarettes and junk food.

There are welcome signs that Government may act on the harm from gambling and its insidious but relentless marketing. Yet the public in general and our UK Government in particular continue to have a 'blind-spot' about alcohol harm, which continues to rise. Because alcohol use has become so embedded in our lives, so 'normalised' in society, Westminster seems to think it is immune from action, despite the well-documented harm to innocent bystanders – be they babies with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, children of alcohol-dependent parents or victims of domestic abuse.

Our work has never been more urgent than it is now.

Despite a difficult landscape, the AHA continued to grow in 2021; now boasting more than 60 members. Our campaigners network has gone from strength to strength with more members of the public than ever joining the call to end alcohol harm. Our team has been working behind the scenes to build cross-party support across Parliament and keep the issue of alcohol harm in the public eye.

By working together as an alliance, we have helped shape a new alcohol duty system expected in 2023 which ensures the strongest drinks always cost the most. We continue to put pressure on the UK Government to improve alcohol labelling so that consumers are given the information they need about what is in their drinks. Our work with the Alcohol Harms Commission helped to shape the new draft statutory guidance published under the Domestic Abuse Act, which includes ensuring there is specialist alcohol support available for victims of domestic abuse.

Thanks to members like you, we can stand up for those affected by alcohol harm, give experts by experience the opportunity to share their stories, and work hard to keep this topic on the agenda to deliver lasting change to public health.

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair



Tackling cheap alcohol

Alcohol duty review

A good alcohol tax system can help to reduce alcohol harm. However, the current system does the opposite, and encourages the production of particularly harmful products.

We've been campaigning for several years to change this system to one that better protects public health. Amongst other things, we encouraged our campaigners to email the Minister and their MPs outlining the changes we need to see in a new system.

Excitingly, in the Autumn 2021 Budget, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a change to the alcohol duty system. The new system will tax all alcohol according to strength which is what we have long been asking for.

Following the announcement, we worked with Lord Brooke to lead a debate on the changes to alcohol duty in the House of Lords. Several Peers spoke about the relationship between the price of alcohol and alcohol harm, the cost of alcohol to the NHS and society, and MUP, after we had briefed them.

We also helped organise a roundtable meeting with the Exchequer Secretary Helen Whately MP and several of our members. We praised the change to a strength-based system and outlined areas where the Government should go further to ensure the system best protects public health. The Minister emphasised the Government's commitment to a strength-based system and acknowledged that stronger drinks should be taxed more as they cause more harm.

The new system is supposed to come into effect in 2023. Before it is being finalised, the Government asked for opinions on the new system in a consultation. In addition to responding ourselves, we provided key points and stats to our members and would like to thank everybody who responded to this important consultation.

We will continue to engage with the Government and Parliamentarians to ensure the new system works to protect health and reduce alcohol harm.



The AHA amplifies the voice of third sector and professional members to promote policy calls with politicians and policy-makers to drive meaningful change.”

Pamela Healy OBE, CEO, British Liver Trust

Campaigning for better labelling

We worked with Alcohol Focus Scotland, Alcohol Change UK and Action on Sugar to examine the sugar and calorie content of different wines – information that is missing from most alcohol labels. We sent 30 bottles of the most popular wines on the market to a laboratory find out what they contain.

The results exposed the wide variation of sugar and calories between products. Without this information readily available, drinkers are being kept in the dark about what exactly is in the products they buy.

Not only do consumers have a right to know what is in their drinks, they also want to know. Polling by YouGov, which we published in summer 2021, found that the Great British public would back Government plans to include nutritional and health information on alcohol products.



Our work on alcohol labelling received extensive media coverage, ensuring the topic has not been allowed to slip off the Government's radar.

In Parliament, we supported Dan Carden MP to lead a debate on alcohol labelling. We also organised a joint letter to then Health Secretary Matt Hancock to express support for the inclusion of calorie and health information on alcohol product labels. More than 94 signatories were collected, including 23 Parliamentarians.

While we continue to await the publication of the consultation on alcohol calorie labelling on alcohol products, our research adds to the multitude of evidence that better labelling is both needed and wanted and that its regulation should be taken out of the hands of the alcohol industry.

Combating alcohol marketing

Advertising serves to normalise alcohol consumption and have it be seen as part of everyday life from a young age.

In September 2021, we released YouGov public opinion polling which found that 77% of the public support controls to limit the exposure of children and young people to alcohol advertising.

Subsequently, we released our [No escape: How alcohol advertising preys on children and vulnerable people](#) report. The report concluded that the “constant bombardment” of alcohol marketing at celebrations such as Christmas and sports events makes it difficult for those in active addiction and recovery to fully participate in everyday life.

The report was launched at an online event where more than 80 delegates heard real life testimony from AHA Special Adviser Melissa Rice and Media Volunteer Susan Laurie as well as discussion from Derek Thomas MP, Alison Thewliss MP, Baroness Finlay and Baroness Jolly.

Following the release of the report, Parliamentarians have been using our research during debates in Parliament, calling on the Government to take urgent action to protect both those in recovery and children from exposure to alcohol marketing.



The AHA’s collective campaigning to reform the regulatory environment to reduce alcohol harm is an important element of wider efforts to reduce health inequalities and improve population health.”

*Professor Ramesh Arasaradnam, Academic Vice President,
Royal College of Physicians*

Working with decision makers

Health and Care Bill

The Health and Care Bill is the biggest piece of health legislation in almost a decade but it hardly mentions alcohol.

To address this, we supported MPs and Peers to table amendments during all stages of the Bill in the House of Commons and House of Lords. This led to great debates, which highlighted the urgent need to address alcohol harm.

Parliamentarians spoke about the different types of harm alcohol can cause and called for policies to reduce this harm, including restricting alcohol marketing, MUP, better alcohol labelling and improving alcohol treatment services and access to support. Several MPs and Peers quoted AHA research and spoke from the briefings we jointly prepared with some AHA members.

Alcohol harm debate

We supported Alcohol Harm Commissioners Derek Thomas MP and Dan Carden MP to apply for and hold a debate on alcohol harm in Parliament. Ahead of the debate, we sent MPs data on alcohol harm in their local areas and information on how policies reducing the affordability, availability and marketing of alcohol help tackle alcohol harm.

Derek Thomas MP stressed the urgency of the problem, stating that we are already at “crisis point” when it comes to alcohol harm and called on the Government to introduce an alcohol strategy without delay.

There was lively discussion, cross-party support for policies to reduce alcohol harm and MPs were open about their own experience. Liam Byrne MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children of Alcoholics spoke passionately about the importance of ending the silence around alcohol addiction to “break the cycle of the disease cascading down any more generations to come”.

Alex Norris MP, then Shadow Public Health Minister, said that cuts to services have meant that many people seeking treatment are not accessing it.

He went on to say that Labour supports having more information on alcohol labels in order for consumers to have “consistent, high-quality information” available on the products they buy and drink.



Working with decision makers

Commission on Alcohol Harm

The Commission on Alcohol Harm was set up at the start of 2020 to examine the extent of alcohol harm in the UK. The Commission is chaired by Baroness Finlay and supported by a panel of cross-party Parliamentarians, clinicians and experts from relevant fields.

Following the publication of the Commission's [*"It's everywhere" – alcohol's public face and private harm*](#) report in September 2020, we have continued to serve as secretariat and work closely with Commission members. In April 2021, a debate was held in the House of Lords about the Commission's report, which highlighted a number of stark findings. Baroness Finlay outlined the recommendations of the Commission – starting with the urgent need for an alcohol strategy. In his response, the Minister said he "paid tribute to [Baroness Finlay] and her team for spearheading the excellent report of the Commission on Alcohol Harm".

Together with the Commissioners, we met then Exchequer Secretary Kemi Badenoch to discuss the alcohol duty review. We also wrote to the new Welsh Health Minister outlining policy recommendations to reduce alcohol harm in Wales.

In June 2021, the new draft statutory guidance for support for domestic abuse victims was published. This now includes specialist alcohol support, which we called for in our amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill.

We also worked with Commissioners on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and got amendments tabled on recognising alcohol as a driver for serious violence and reducing the drink drive limit.



Alliances are essential if we are to amplify the voices of the millions of people who suffer from alcohol harm and to encourage the Government to take action to reduce alcohol harm. The AHA is credible, thoughtful, evidence-based and collaborative."

Dr Richard Piper, CEO, Alcohol Change UK

Growing our networks

Seminar Sessions

This year we introduced online seminar sessions as a way to help members stay up-to-date with the latest research on alcohol policy and to highlight how alcohol harm impacts communities across the UK. Although we provide membership priority to these events, we have been able to open them up to others working in the field. We hope that this will help us to continue to build strong relationships with other organisations working to reduce alcohol harm.

In January 2022, our sessions on minimum unit pricing (led by AHA Special Adviser Professor Eileen Kaner) and alcohol harm in the LGBT+ community (led by Professor Carol Emslie and David Barbour) were well attended and provoked great discussion.

We will continue to host seminars throughout the year and welcome ideas for topics from all members.

Campaigners network

Over the past year, the AHA has invested time and resources into growing our campaigners network. This is a group of members of the public who are interested in alcohol harm and keen to take action to reduce it. It is a great way for us to connect with those directly impacted by alcohol harm and to build relationships with MPs by helping campaigners to write to and meet their local MP.

We send our campaigners regular emails and create opportunities for them to take action on issues they are passionate about and empower them to share their stories.



The Alcohol Health Alliance is the glue that pulls together organisations and individuals who care passionately about reducing the harms caused by alcohol. It enables them to have a much greater voice in Westminster and the media and provides a counterweight to a well-resourced industry that puts its own profits before the health of the public.”

Colin Shevills, Special Adviser to the Alcohol Health Alliance

Our year in numbers

Campaign highlights



2,606 new campaigners

688 actions taken

Parliamentary highlights



24 meetings with Parliamentarians

16 mentions of the AHA in Parliament

59 mentions of alcohol following AHA briefings

30 questions asked in Parliament for the AHA

6 consultation responses

Media highlights



2,274 pieces of news coverage

4 opinion pieces in journals

32 broadcast interviews

1 April 2021 - 18 March 2022



Year in review: 2021-2022

With thanks

Our work to tackle alcohol harm could not be possible without generous grants and contributions, in particular from the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, Cancer Research UK, the Institute of Alcohol Studies and the Royal College of Physicians.

We would also like to specifically thank the members of our Steering Group and the Communications and Advocacy Group, who give their time to provide strategic oversight and direction, as well as their expert knowledge.

Finally, a huge thank you to all our members, who supported us financially, with their time and expertise and by sharing our actions, arguments and materials – without you we could not do what we do!

How to get involved

The Alcohol Health Alliance UK (AHA) is an alliance of more than 60 non-governmental organisations whose mission is to reduce the harm caused to health by alcohol. Our members include medical royal colleges, charities, treatment providers and alcohol health campaigners. We work together to:

- Highlight the rising levels of alcohol-related health harm;
- Propose evidence-based solutions to reduce this harm; and
- Influence decision makers to take positive action to address the harm caused by alcohol.

We are always looking to expand our reach. If your organisation is interested in working with us or to join the AHA, please contact us on info@ahauk.org

If you as an individual would like to be updated on what we do and how you can help tackle alcohol harm, join our campaigners network here or let us know by emailing info@ahauk.org

You can also follow us on Twitter [@UK_AHA](https://twitter.com/UK_AHA)

Our members

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

Action on Addiction

Action on Sugar

Addiction Professionals

alcoHELP

Alcohol Action Ireland

Alcohol Change UK

Alcohol Focus Scotland

Aquarius

Association of Directors of Public Health

BAC-IN CIC

Balance North East

British Association for the Study of the Liver

British Liver Trust

British Medical Association

British Society of Gastroenterology

Cancer Research UK

Centre for Mental Health

Change, Grow, Live

Drs in Unite

Druglink

Faculty of Dental Surgery

Faculty of Occupational Medicine

Faculty of Public Health

Foundation for Liver Research

Humankind

Institute of Alcohol Studies

Look Around

Medical Council on Alcohol

Men's Health Forum

Nacoa

National Addiction Centre

National Organisation for FASD UK

Northern Ireland Alcohol and Drug Alliance

Public Health Action

Royal College of Anaesthetists

Royal College for Emergency Medicine

Royal College of General Practitioners

Royal College of Midwives

Royal College of Nursing

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

Royal College of Physicians of London

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons,
Glasgow

Royal College of Psychiatrists

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Royal College of Surgeons of England

Royal Society for Public Health

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and
Drugs

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems

Share Shrewsbury

Society for the Study of Addiction

SPECTRUM Research Consortium

Spinal Injuries Association

Tower Hamlets GP Care Group CIC

Turning Point

Violence and Society Research Group

We Are With You

WAGE

World Cancer Research Fund

Yorkshire and Humber Public Health
Network