



18 August 2017

Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Public Health and Sport
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Cabinet Secretary and Minister

10% increase in alcohol-related deaths from 2015-2016

We are writing to express our concern over the latest alcohol-related death figures which show that 1,265 Scots lost their lives to alcohol last year; a 10% increase on the previous year and the highest figure since 2010. This is significantly higher than the equally tragic 867 drug deaths in 2016, as published earlier this week. Together alcohol and drugs caused over 2,000 deaths in Scotland last year – deaths which are entirely preventable.

While there are likely to be many reasons behind these increases, not least the fact that minimum unit pricing is still not in place, the recent cut in direct funding to local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) has surely played a part.

We urge the Scottish Government to re-commit its efforts and resources over the longer term to support evidence-based policies that will save Scottish lives. The joint report which we published earlier this year contains a comprehensive set of policies aimed at changing Scotland's damaging relationship with alcohol and addressing the associated health inequalities. These include:

- Developing a strategic approach to reducing the availability of alcohol, and improving existing licensing regulation
- Reducing children's exposure to alcohol advertising and sponsorship
- Protecting every child's right to an alcohol-free childhood
- Clearer consumer information about the health risks associated with drinking
- More investment in alcohol prevention, treatment and support services
- Recognising the benefits of supporting families in their own right, 'whole family' approaches and family-inclusive treatment and recovery.

reducing harm caused by alcohol

Alcohol Focus Scotland, 166 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW

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We applaud the Scottish Government for seeing through minimum pricing, but there is much more to be done. As long as cheap alcohol is highly visible and easily accessible, heavy drinkers will struggle to reduce damaging consumption levels.

We seek your reassurance that the scope of the alcohol strategy 'refresh' will be proportionate to the scale of the alcohol problem facing Scotland. We are ready to play our part in trying to prevent and reduce alcohol harm and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Douglas, Chief Executive, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Dr Nikki Thompson, Deputy Chair, BMA Scotland

Dr Eric Carlin, Director, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems

Justina Murray, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

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