



Department
of Health &
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From Jo Churchill MP
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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

03 March 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 November to Matt Hancock on behalf of a number of your constituents about alcohol misuse. I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence in recent months and work to ensure frontline services are delivered.

The Government is committed to supporting the most vulnerable at risk from alcohol misuse. We are seeing an overall decrease in the number of people drinking, especially in the younger population, which is highly encouraging. However, we are not complacent and have a programme of work at national and local level to reduce the health harms from alcohol.

We are ensuring people are aware of the health risks through the One You campaign and including an alcohol risk assessment in the NHS health check. We are also communicating the UK Chief Medical Officers' low-risk drinking guidelines on the labelling of alcohol products.

We have made a £6 million investment to support children with alcohol-dependent parents and have also recently announced £473,000 funding to support work on foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Furthermore, £2 million in health funding has been provided to enable access to health and support services for people who are sleeping rough and have a substance misuse.

As announced in the *NHS Long Term Plan*, we are establishing specialist Alcohol Care Teams in hospitals with the highest rates of alcohol harm; it is estimated that this will prevent 50,000 admissions over five years. Local authorities received over £3 billion in 2019/20 to be used exclusively on public health, including alcohol treatment services.

In 2019/20, Public Health England (PHE) funded 23 projects, using £6 million capital grants funding, which enabled local authorities to invest in better meeting the needs of people who require alcohol treatment, including parents who are dependent drinkers.

PHE has published an online monitoring tool to track behavioural changes, including alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings on alcohol consumption are that, as a whole, it remained about the same across the population during the

pandemic. Those aged 18 to 34 were more likely to report consuming less alcohol each week than before, and those aged 35 to 54 were more likely to report an increase. There was an increase in the proportion of 'increasing and higher risk' drinkers from April to August 2020.

The Green Paper *Advancing our Health: Prevention in the 2020s*, published in July 2019, made a specific commitment to encourage the general drinking population towards lower-strength alternatives and to support further innovation in the sector. Two specific proposals include working with industry to deliver a significant increase in the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products by 2025, and reviewing the evidence to consider increasing the 0.05 per cent ABV alcohol threshold to 0.5 per cent in line with other European countries. The Green Paper consultation closed on 14 October and the feedback is now being analysed.

I hope this reply is helpful to your constituents.



JO CHURCHILL