

Press Release



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Government must stand firm on laws to tackle binge drinking, say North West health campaigners

North West region-wide wellbeing and health campaign group Our Life has expressed concern at reports that the government is considering delaying new laws to tackle the rising unhealthy drinking culture in the UK.

Reports in today's *Times* newspaper suggest that "measures to curb binge drinking top a list of regulations to be shelved" as the government looks to curtail parts of its legislative programme in the face of the current economic downturn. Our Life has reacted angrily to reports that the government's proposed mandatory code of practice for alcohol retailers might be delayed until after 2011 as part of a "clear out" of anti-business measures believed to have been ordered by the business secretary Lord Mandelson.

Our Life head of corporate affairs Andy Walker said: "The government must stand firmly by its pledges to tackle binge drinking and alcohol harm. Such measures are hugely popular with the public. Only last month 72% of respondents to an Our Life poll called on the government to ban activities such as all-you-can-drink offers and other irresponsible and excessive drinks promotions such as dispensing alcohol directly into customers' mouths."

"The cost and stress caused to people across the North West by alcohol promotions that result in excessive consumption has gone too far and people want action," Walker claimed. "The promotion of excessive drinking leads to enormous personal distress for families blighted by alcohol harm and is a massive cash burden on policing and the health service. The estimated cost of alcohol-related and alcohol-specific crime in England is £12 billion and the cost to the NHS in the North West region alone is more than £400 million," said Walker.

“We cannot afford to wait on this until 2011. Instead of listening to the vested interests of the alcohol retailers who would rather the government did nothing, ministers should take note of the views of thousands of people across the North West who want to see effective measures to address alcohol harm and implement a strong code of practice for alcohol retailers as soon as possible.”

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For further information contact Andy Walker, Head of Corporate Affairs, Our Life, on 0161 237 2031 or 07818 568573 or email andy.walker@ourlife.org.uk

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.