

The Manifestos – what they say about drug and alcohol issues

With all three main party manifestos now launched I've had a look at what they say about how they would tackle drug and alcohol issues. The following are the direct quotes from each of the manifestos. As you will see there is a focus on treatment and criminal justice interventions with very little emphasis on education or prevention.

What they say	Labour	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats
Drug policy	On drugs, our message is clear: we will not tolerate illegal drug use. We have reclassified cannabis to Class B and banned 'legal highs'.	A Conservative government will help to mend our broken society – by cracking down on drink- and drug-fuelled violence, tackling re-offending, and intervening early to stop young people getting onto the conveyor belt to crime – in order to reduce the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour.	Ensure that financial resources, and police and court time, are not wasted on the unnecessary prosecution and imprisonment of drug users and addicts; the focus instead should be on getting addicts the treatment they need. Police should concentrate their efforts on organised drug pushers and gangs.
Treatment	<p>More addicts are being treated, with a higher proportion going on to drug-free lives. We will switch investment towards those programmes that are shown to sustain drug-free lives and reduce crime.</p> <p>Alcohol treatment places will be trebled to cover all persistent criminals where alcohol is identified as a cause of their crimes.</p>	<p>Drug and alcohol addiction are behind many of the crimes that are committed on our streets, but the treatment that too many addicts receive just maintains their habits. We will give courts the power to use abstinence-based Drug Rehabilitation Orders to help offenders kick drugs once and for all. We will introduce a system of temporary bans on new 'legal highs' while health issues are considered by independent experts. To reform our system of rehabilitation further, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply our payment by results reforms to the youth justice system; • engage with specialist organisations to provide education, mentoring and drug rehabilitation programmes to help young offenders go straight; and, • pilot a scheme to create Prison and Rehabilitation Trusts so that just one organisation is responsible for helping to stop a criminal re-offending. 	Move offenders who are drug addicts or mentally ill into more appropriate secure accommodation.

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ACMD			Always base drugs policy on independent scientific advice, including making the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs completely independent of government.
Alcohol	We all have a responsibility to look after our own health, supported by our family and our employer. The ban on smoking in public places will be maintained. Wherever necessary, we will act to protect children's health from tobacco, alcohol and sunbeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow councils and the police to shut down permanently any shop or bar found persistently selling alcohol to children; • double the maximum fine for under-age alcohol sales to £20,000; • raise taxes on those drinks linked to anti-social drinking, while abolishing Labour's new 'cider tax' on ordinary drinkers. • ban off-licences and supermarkets from selling alcohol below cost price; and, • permit local councils to charge more for late-night licences to pay for additional policing. 	Reduce the ill health and crime caused by excessive drinking. We support a ban on below-cost selling, and are in favour of the principle of minimum pricing, subject to detailed work to establish how it could be used in tackling problems of irresponsible drinking. We will also review the complex, ill-thought-through system of taxation for alcohol to ensure it tackles binge drinking without unfairly penalising responsible drinkers, pubs and important local industries.
Prevention	The NHS must be as effective at preventing ill health as it is at treating those in need of care. Prevention and early intervention will be at the heart of our plans for a reformed healthcare system offering more for every pound we spend, significantly improving survival rates for cancer, heart disease and strokes so that we are among the very best in the world.	We will turn the Department of Health into a Department for Public Health so that the promotion of good health and prevention of illness get the attention they need. We will provide separate public health funding to local communities, which will be accountable for – and paid according to – how successful they are in improving their residents' health.	Give priority to preventing people getting ill by linking payments to health boards and GPs more directly to prevention measures.