

Alcohol Health Alliance UK
c/o Institute of Alcohol Studies
Alliance House
12 Caxton Street
London
SW1H 0QS

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

10 May 2021

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to express our support for the inclusion of calorie and health information on alcohol product labels. We agree with you on the importance of consumer choice and that it is only fair to give individuals the right information to make good decisions about their food and drink. However, when it comes to alcohol, consumers are not currently provided with the information they need.

The majority of the public agrees and wants to know what is in their drinks, so we were disappointed to see how the Government's plan to introduce better alcohol labelling was covered in parts of the media recently. New research shows that 75% of people want the number of units in a product on alcohol labels, 61% want calorie information, and 53% want the amount of sugar.

Displaying calorie information on alcohol labels can empower people to take control of their health. Alcohol is very energy dense, with a large glass of white wine having the equivalent calories as a slice of pizza. For those who drink, alcohol accounts for nearly 10% of the daily calorie intake, with around 3.4 million adults consuming an additional days' worth of calories each week – totalling an additional two months of food each year. Yet, the majority of the public (80%) is unaware of the calorie content of common drinks.

In addition to calorie labelling, we support providing further health information on alcohol labels, including the Chief Medical Officers' low-risk drinking guidelines. Alcohol is linked to 80 deaths a day in the UK, and yet, alcohol harm is poorly understood by drinkers: only one in five people know the drinking guidelines, and only one in ten can spontaneously identify cancer as a health consequence of alcohol. Alcohol labels are an effective tool to change that: a study in Canada showed that consumers exposed to health warnings on labels were three times more likely to be aware of the drinking guidelines, and were also more likely to know about the link between alcohol and cancer.

The current voluntary system of alcohol labelling is not working. Legislation is now necessary to empower consumers and provide transparency. Despite the Government's efforts to encourage alcohol producers to reflect the drinking

guidelines on labels, research by the Alcohol Health Alliance shows that more than 70% of the labels reviewed did not include the up-to-date guidelines.

We commend the Government's decision to consult on alcohol calorie labelling and encourage you to use this opportunity to include wider health information, such as the Chief Medical Officers' drinking guidelines, to empower people to make informed health choices and reduce alcohol harm.

Yours sincerely,

Sir David Amess MP for Southend West

Dan Carden MP for Liverpool, Walton

Dr James Davies MP for Vale of Clwyd

Patricia Gibson MP for North Ayrshire and Arran

Rachel Hopkins MP for Luton South

Kenny MacAskill MP for East Lothian

John McDonnell MP for Hayes and Harlington

Catherine McKinnell MP for Newcastle upon Tyne North

Grahame Morris MP for Easington

Andrew Selous MP for South West Bedfordshire

Derek Thomas MP for St Ives

Christian Wakeford MP for Bury South

Dr Philippa Whitford MP for Central Ayrshire

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

Lord Balfe

Lord Brooke of Alventhrope

The Lord Bishop of Carlisle

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington

Baroness Jolly

Baroness Masham of Ilton

Lord Ramsbotham

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance UK

Andrew Goddard, President, Royal College of Physicians

Professor Ravi Mahajan, President, Royal College of Anaesthetists

Professor Colin Drummond, Faculty of Addictions, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Professor Dame Parveen Kumar, Chair of British Medical Association Board of Science

Matthew Garrett, Dean, Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England

Christina Marriott, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health

Professor Linda Bauld, Director, SPECTRUM Consortium

Emlyn Samuel, Director of Policy, Cancer Research UK

Dr Katherine Severi, Chief Executive, Institute of Alcohol Studies

Dr Richard Piper, Chief Executive Officer, Alcohol Change UK

Pamela Healy OBE, Chief Executive, British Liver Trust

Steven Masson, Alcohol Lead, British Society of Gastroenterology

Alison Douglas, CEO, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Dr Alastair MacGilchrist, Chair, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)

Lord Ribeiro

*Sue Taylor, Acting Head of Alcohol Policy,
Balance*

Hilary Henriques MBE, CEO, Nacoa

Dr Jenny Lisle, Medical Council on Alcohol

*Natalie Day, Chief Executive, Foundation
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*Professor Guruprasad Aithal, President,
British Association for the Study of the Liver
(BASL)*

*Kate Oldridge-Turner, Head of Policy and
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International*

Dr Anna E Livingstone, Doctors in UNITE

*Kate Halliday, Executive Director, Addiction
Professionals*

*Justina Murray, CEO, Scottish Families
Affected by Alcohol and Drugs*

*Pauline Campbell, Vice Chair, Northern
Ireland Alcohol and Drugs Alliance*

*Eric Appleby, Chair, Alcohol and Families
Alliance*

Paul Townsley, CEO, Humankind

Vivienne Evans, Chief Executive, Adfam

Julie Bass, Chief Executive, Turning Point

Oliver Standing, Director, Collective Voice

Terry Martin, Founder, Alcohelp

Katharine Jenner, CEO, Blood Pressure UK

*Professor Graham MacGregor CBE,
Chairman of Action on Sugar and Action on
Salt*

Anna Dixon, CEO, Centre for Ageing Better

*Andy Burman, CEO, The British Dietetic
Association*

*Dr Maria Bryant, Chair, UK Association for
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*Caroline Cerny, Alliance Lead, Obesity
Health Alliance*

*Kathy Lewis, Acting chair/ Vice chair,
Caroline Walker Trust*

*Dr Miles C Allison, Acting Chair, Welsh
Liver Plan Implementation Group*

*Wayne Gault, Lead Officer Aberdeenshire
Alcohol and Drug Partnership*

*Lee Wilson, Head of the Forward Leeds and
North Yorkshire Horizons alcohol and drug
services*

*David Aitken, Interim Head of Adult services
/ ADP Chair, East Dunbartonshire Health
and Social Care Partnership*

*Wendy McConnachie, Alcohol and Drug
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*Jillian Galloway, Chair, Angus Alcohol and
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*Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Health
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*Diane Goslar, Service User, Royal College
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*Rachael Murray, Professor of Population
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Professor Jonathan Shepherd CBE, Crime and Security Research Institute, Cardiff University

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Professor Alison McCallum, Centre for Population Health Sciences, Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh

Keith Humphreys, Ph.D., Esther Ting Memorial Professor, Stanford University

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Dr Allen Gallagher, Research Associate, University of Bath

Crispin Acton, Expert Adviser, Institute of Alcohol Studies

Chris Record, Consultant Hepatologist, Newcastle University

Dr Olivia Maynard, University of Bristol

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