

IAS | Institute of
Alcohol Studies

Bringing together evidence, policy
and practice to reduce alcohol harm



Strategy 2020-2023



Foreword from IAS Chair

Since its establishment, the Institute of Alcohol Studies has worked to raise understanding of the harm alcohol causes to individuals, families, communities and society as a whole. Often faced with ambivalence in political circles, IAS has ensured alcohol harm has remained on the policy agenda, informing key decision makers and influencers with the latest available evidence on what works to reduce harm.

To bring together evidence, policy and practice, IAS has published several high impact reports in recent years addressing issues of social concern, such as the effects of parental drinking on children, alcohol's impact on frontline emergency service workers and the role alcohol plays in violent crime. These findings have kept information about alcohol harm relevant to current debates and seen IAS build a reputation as a trusted authority on alcohol policy matters.

Our collaborative approach to partnership working has placed IAS at the heart of campaigning coalitions both at home and overseas. This

means that those seeking to tackle alcohol problems are fully equipped to advocate for evidence-based actions that will save lives, prevent crime and reduce alcohol's social burden.

This new strategy takes stock of the successes IAS has experienced in recent years and builds on the developments in our knowledge and relationships with key stakeholders. The focused approach outlined in this document is based on extensive discussions with staff, trustees, expert advisors and external partners. I am confident that the ambitious plans we have set out for the coming three years will enable IAS to realise its full potential and build momentum for policy change that will make a meaningful difference to lives that are currently blighted by alcohol.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Carr'.

Michael Carr
Chair
Institute of Alcohol Studies

Foreword from IAS Chief Executive



I am delighted to present the new IAS strategic plan 2020-2023, which outlines our priorities over the next three years. We are extremely proud of the contribution we have made to help keep an issue of utmost importance on the agenda, despite substantial challenges. Rates of alcohol harm remain stubbornly high across the UK, and public policy has been subject to significant turbulence recently.

However, the evidence base to support effective action continues to grow, and the three years ahead promise to provide important windows of opportunity to influence change that could improve our nation's health, tackle crime and boost productivity. The introduction of innovative policies like minimum unit pricing in Scotland and Wales will provide crucial data to support decisions in England and Northern Ireland and IAS will proactively share findings to promote a well-informed debate.

We will work to ensure the latest available evidence on how to prevent and reduce alcohol harm is analysed, promoted to decision makers and

understood by key influencers. We will continue to support governments and intergovernmental agencies in their deliberations on how best to approach the challenge posed by alcohol harm.

We understand the importance of partnership and multi-stakeholder approaches to tackling complex health and social issues. Through collaboration and in alliance, we will continue to build support for change, based on the best evidence, and place the public interest at the heart of policy decisions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K Severi".

Katherine Severi
Chief Executive
Institute of Alcohol Studies



Who we are

The Institute of Alcohol Studies is an independent body bringing together evidence, policy and practice from home and abroad to promote an informed debate on alcohol's impact on society. Our purpose is to advance the use of the best available evidence in public policy decisions on alcohol.

Our governance

IAS is governed by a Board of Trustees and the delivery of IAS' strategy is overseen by a Chief Executive who is supported by a team of experienced research, policy and public affairs professionals. A panel of external Expert Advisors provides guidance and support for IAS activities.

IAS is independent of alcohol industry influence and does not accept funding from or enter into bilateral partnerships with alcohol industry bodies. The majority of IAS funding is from a grant made by the Alliance House Foundation. We also receive grants from charitable bodies that share our goals and values.

Our values

Our core values shape our culture, guide our decisions and inspire us to achieve our goals.

Ethical

We are committed to an ethical approach, always acting with honesty, integrity and transparency

Evidence-based

We are empirical, thorough and reliable. We can be trusted to present the best available evidence on alcohol's impact on society

Collaborative

We understand the importance of building capacity within civil society and proactively seek out opportunities to partner with and support others who share our goals

Innovative

We recognise that innovation, creativity and agility are key to tackling the vast scale of alcohol harm. We aim to continually build on the existing evidence base and identify emerging trends to help set the policy agenda in the public interest



In everything we do, we strive to reach the highest possible standards and to make an impact that will ultimately lead to a reduction in alcohol harm.

Our challenge: tackling alcohol harm

Alcohol harm remains a major cause for concern both globally and in the UK. Worldwide, alcohol contributes to more than three million deaths per year and is responsible for 5.1% of the global burden of disease.¹ The UK experiences high levels of harm associated with alcohol:

Health burden

In 2018 there were **24,720** alcohol-related deaths in England² and **over**



1.1 million hospital admissions³

Families

There are an estimated

200,000 children

living with a parent or carer who is dependent on alcohol and the greatest impacts of familial drinking are most often experienced by children⁸



Crime

More than

one million

alcohol-related crimes occur each year, **40%** of all violent offences committed under the influence of alcohol in England and Wales⁴⁻⁶



Inequalities

People from low income groups drink less overall than high income groups, yet rates of alcohol harm are significantly higher among deprived communities: in the UK people from the most deprived areas are up to **six times** more likely to die from an alcohol-related cause than people from the least deprived areas⁹



Road safety

8,600

drink driving casualties

250 deaths

in 2017, with

14%

of all road fatalities in the UK⁷ accounted to drink driving

Economic burden

The estimated cost of alcohol harm to UK society is between

£21- £52 billion each year¹⁰



We see raising awareness of the harms that alcohol causes as a core part of our work, to ensure that these important issues get the attention they deserve.

Our framework for policy action

Our work is guided by the World Health Organisation's policy recommendations, outlined in the 2010 Global Strategy to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol.¹¹ Within the UK context, these recommendations have been assessed by Public Health England, who identified the following areas for action on alcohol harm as effective and cost-effective:¹⁰

Price:

making alcohol less affordable via tax increases and minimum pricing policies

Availability:

enact and enforce restrictions on the physical availability of alcohol via reduced hours of sale and minimum purchase age laws

Marketing:

enact and enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising across multiple types of media

Drink-driving:

enact and enforce drink-driving laws and blood alcohol content limits via sobriety checkpoints

Health service response:

provide prevention, treatment and care for alcohol use disorders and comorbid conditions in health and social services

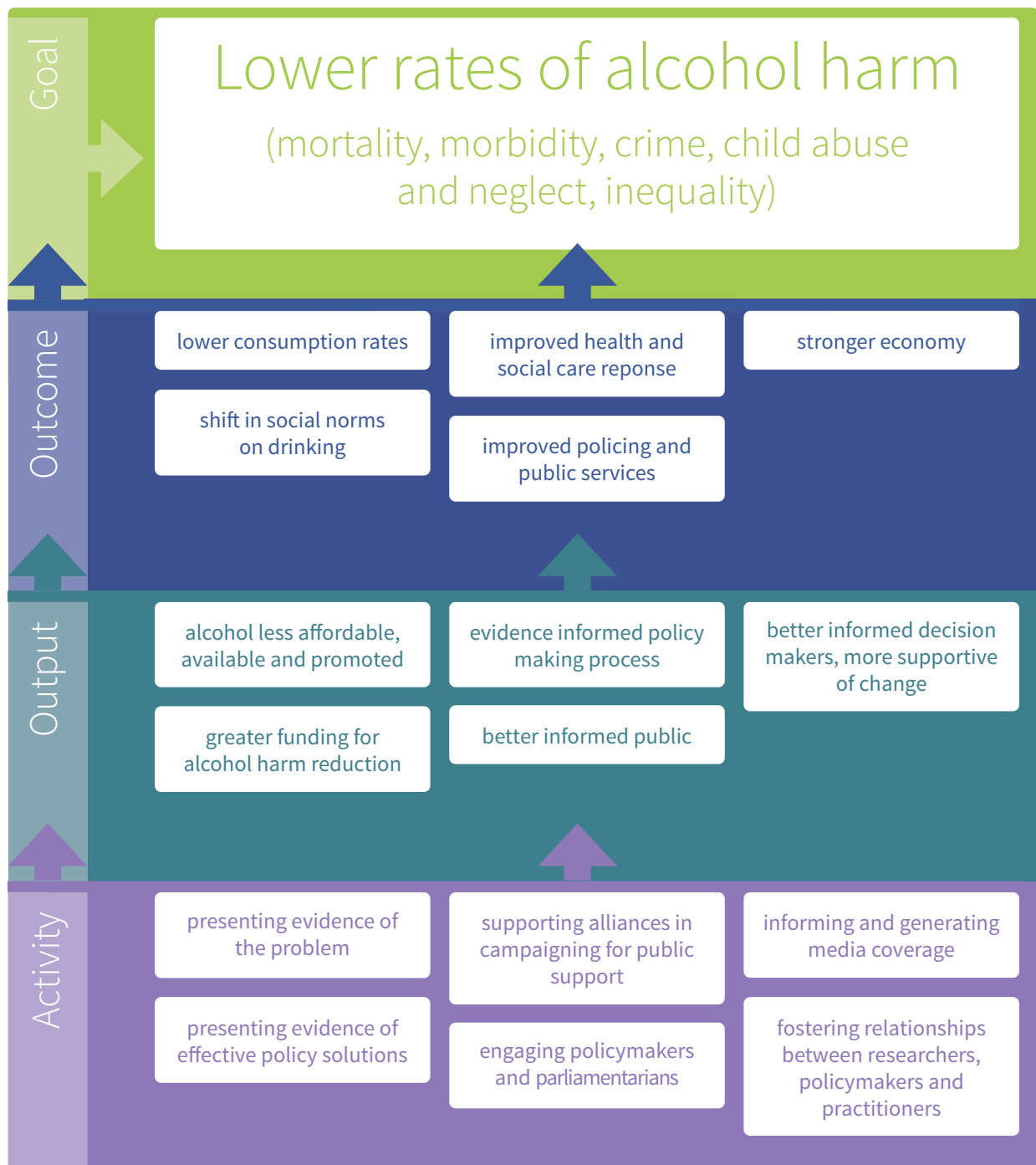
Information and education:

provide consumer information about, and label, alcoholic beverages to indicate the harm related to alcohol

The evidence shows that a multisectoral approach, combining the above policy interventions, will create a 'critical mass' effect to escalate the reduction in alcohol harms. We therefore work to ensure the latest evidence on all these policy areas is made available in an effort to build support for a comprehensive, evidence-based alcohol strategy.

How our actions help us reach our goals

Our activities are situated within a strategic framework that aims to secure a reduction in harms to individuals, communities and society caused by alcohol.



Our activities

Research reports

We are highly responsive to research and policy debates by plugging gaps in knowledge through research reports that help shape the alcohol policy agenda. We will continue to produce impactful reports on salient and emerging issues through a combination of in-house analysis and commissioned research.

IAS is committed to supporting knowledge exchange, the production of high quality research and supporting the development of early career researchers. Over the next three years we will launch a series of open calls for research proposals as part of a new IAS small grants scheme, designed to encourage innovation in alcohol research to support policy change.

Events

IAS frequently brings together academics, policymakers, practitioners and civil society representatives to exchange evidence, ideas and best practice on how to tackle alcohol harm. We will continue to host regular seminars and symposia to update key stakeholders on new developments and provide networking opportunities that build positive relationships.

Partnerships

We are renowned for our collaborative approach to everything we do and are proud to be members of energetic and impactful coalitions of like-minded organisations and individuals who share our goal of tackling alcohol harm. We will continue to support the work of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK, the Alcohol and Families Alliance, and Eurocare, the European Alcohol Policy Alliance. We regularly partner with academic institutions to inform our work and will continue to proactively seek out opportunities to extend our partnerships to support researchers in maximising the impact of their findings.



Communications

IAS is a one stop shop for anyone seeking information about alcohol's impact on society and effective policy responses. Effective communication is an integral part of our work. We regularly appear in news media to ensure public debate is informed with the latest evidence and the most effective approaches to tackle harm. We make available the latest statistics and evidence on alcohol trends via our Alcohol Knowledge Centre, hosted on the IAS website. We also provide regular updates on social media and host expert opinion pieces on our popular blog. Each month we produce a roundup of alcohol news, research developments and current affairs in our online magazine Alcohol Alert, which is accompanied by a topical interview available to stream or download as an IAS podcast.

We understand that methods of communication have radically changed over the past decade and we are excited about the opportunities presented by new media and digital channels. Over the next three years we will review our communications strategy to ensure that we are embracing change and the information we share remains accessible and relevant to key stakeholders.

Expertise

IAS is a centre of expertise in alcohol research and public policy matters. We advise governments and intergovernmental organisations, academic researchers, medical bodies and civil society groups as part of our aim to bring research, policy and practice together to tackle alcohol harm. We will continue to work closely with the World Health Organisation, UK Government and our existing non-governmental partners to ensure that alcohol policy remains on the agenda and effective solutions are prioritised.





Our priorities 2020-2023

In addition to our core business outlined above, IAS will focus on the following aspects of alcohol policy and research over the next three years:

Affordability

Alcohol is 74% more affordable in the UK than it was in 1987 and evidence shows that increased affordability is linked to higher rates of harm.¹² Raising the real price of alcohol through taxes and pricing policies is identified by the World Health Organisation and Public Health England as one of the most effective and cost-effective ways to reduce rates of alcohol harm. IAS will continue to raise awareness of the impact of minimum unit pricing in Scotland and following its implementation in Wales and the Republic of Ireland, to build support for its introduction in England and Northern Ireland. We will also continue to press for alcohol duty reform to correct anomalies in the current tax structures that incentivise the production of high-harm, low-cost products and to raise vital revenues for public services.

Marketing

Alcohol marketing is linked to youth drinking with evidence from home and abroad showing that exposure to alcohol advertising, including via traditional media, sports sponsorship and online digital channels, is associated with children and adolescents drinking at an earlier age and in greater quantities.¹³ Research commissioned by IAS has also identified how alcohol promotions may help shape environments that drive harmful social norms around gender equity and violence against women and girls.¹⁴ The fast pace at which modern commercial communications techniques are evolving presents a challenge for regulators seeking to protect children and vulnerable groups from exposure to harmful promotions.

IAS will continue to monitor policy developments and share learning from countries that have introduced



alcohol marketing restrictions. We will identify opportunities to contribute to the growing body of evidence on the impact of alcohol advertising and promotions, including assessing the views of both children and adult consumers. We will also explore how alcohol marketing may interact with other harmful consumption patterns such as gambling and unhealthy diets, exchanging knowledge with experts and forming relationships with new stakeholder groups.

Crime and enforcement

We recognise that alcohol places a significant burden on the criminal justice system and law enforcement community. We will continue to work with policy officials, policing bodies, researchers and NGO partners to exchange knowledge and best practice about the most effective approaches to protecting the public and tackling alcohol-related crime.

Alcohol is associated with a substantial proportion of violent crime in the UK, yet reporting processes for many alcohol-related violent offences are complex, creating challenges for understanding prevalence rates. In particular, incidents

of alcohol-related domestic violence, where repeat victimisation is common, are chronically underreported. IAS will explore how to make better use of data available to estimate prevalence rates for alcohol-related violent offences, including through existing crime surveys and hospital records.

Social and environmental impacts of alcohol

It is well known that alcohol harm extends beyond individual drinkers, damaging families, communities and putting a strain on our economy and public services, and this will remain an important focus of our work. Less is known about alcohol's contribution to wider social and environmental concerns such as corporate political influence, data privacy, sustainable development and climate change. IAS will explore and present how the activities of the alcohol industry impacts on issues of global importance to ensure that public debate is fully informed about the range and extent of alcohol harm and that appropriate, evidence-based policies are introduced to improve the health, wealth and sustainability of future generations.

References

1. World Health Organization. Alcohol
2. Public Health England. Alcohol-related mortality (Persons) 2018. Local Alcohol Profiles for England
3. Public Health England. Admission episodes for alcohol-related conditions (Broad) (Persons) 2017/18. Local Alcohol Profiles for England
4. Office for National Statistics (2018). The nature of violent crime in England and Wales
5. Police Service of Northern Ireland (2018). Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2017/18. Annual Bulletin
6. Scottish Government (2019). Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2017-2018: main findings
7. Department for Transport (2019). Drink-drive accidents and casualties. Reported drinking and driving
8. Gov.uk (2018). Innovation fund open to help children of dependent drinkers
9. Institute of Alcohol Studies (2014). Alcohol, Health Inequalities and the Harm Paradox: Why some groups face greater problems despite consuming less alcohol
10. Public Health England (2016). The public health burden of alcohol: evidence review
11. World Health Organization (2010). Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol
12. Institute of Alcohol Studies. Price Factsheet
13. Addiction Journal (supplement) (2017). The Regulation of Alcohol Marketing: From Research to Public Health Policy: Addiction: Vol 112, No S1
14. Atkinson AM, Sumnall H, Begley E, Jones L (2019). A rapid narrative review of literature on gendered alcohol marketing and its effects: exploring the targeting and representation of women



An Institute of Alcohol Studies publication

Alliance House
12 Caxton Street
London SW1H 0QS

Telephone | 020 7222 4001
Email | info@ias.org.uk
Twitter | [@InstAlcStud](https://twitter.com/InstAlcStud)
Web | www.ias.org.uk

The Institute of Alcohol Studies is a
registered charity (no. 1112671)