

IAS Institute of Alcohol Studies

Bringing together evidence, policy and practice to reduce alcohol harm

2023 - 2026

STRATEGY
2023-2026



A Message From Our Chair

It was a great honour to take up the post as Chair of IAS in November 2022. Michael Carr had chaired IAS since I joined the Board and he had steered the organisation skilfully to establish IAS as a leading organisation linking research and policy, nationally and internationally. So, my first task is to thank Michael for his contribution and to thank other Board members and staff for their welcome.

The alcohol research and policy world is never dull, though it can be frustrating. The frustration usually comes from the gap between knowledge of the best solutions to reduce the extent and range of alcohol harm, and the implementation of those solutions.

There has been a diversification of policy approaches across the UK in recent years and IAS has been at the heart of providing evidence on these developments. There have been successes, such as Minimum Unit Price

in Scotland where I live and worked in clinical practice, and in the principles of the new UK Alcohol Duty system.

IAS is an outward looking organisation, learning from and informing developments internationally and this dissemination and coalition building role is one in which our staff team excel.

I look forward to being part of IAS continuing this work with our new strategy's focus on alcohol and inequalities. We will continue to produce and analyse the best evidence and lead and shape the policy environment, and would be delighted to hear from you if you share our ambitions and values.

Dr Peter Rice
Chair



A Message From Our Chief Executive

The past three years has seen momentous change across the social, political and health landscape. In such a tumultuous period, I am incredibly proud of the amount of high-quality and exciting work the team at IAS has produced and I'd like to thank them all for their support. I also want to thank Dr Alison Giles for her stewardship as interim chief executive during my maternity leave.

Significant progress has been made in relation to alcohol pricing, one of our priority policy areas for 2020-2023. We have pushed for the prioritisation of public health arguments in this debate – and highlighted the evidence and rationale for doing so – over many years. The UK Government's decision to reform alcohol duty to a strength-based system is welcome and we look forward to its introduction in August 2023. Sadly, also during this period, alcohol-specific deaths have increased to a record high and many policy measures that we have been calling for are yet to

gain real traction, despite the weight of evidence. Now is more important than ever to push for action on alcohol harm.

We are also excited to be celebrating our 40th year in 2023, and look forward to seeing our supporters at an anniversary event later in the year.

Our new Strategy 2023-2026 will focus on alcohol and inequalities. Implementing evidence-based alcohol control measures would have a triple effect of reducing harm, reducing health inequalities, and improving public finances. We will continue to build on the ever-increasing knowledge base to encourage policymakers to act, and in doing so, improve our country's health and economy, making it a fairer place to live.

Dr Katherine Severi
Chief Executive



K Severi



About IAS

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:

Our purpose is to advance the use of the best available evidence in public policy decisions on alcohol.

Our values:

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

<p style="text-align: center;">Ethical</p> <p>We are committed to an ethical approach, always acting with honesty, integrity and transparency.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Evidence-based</p> <p>We are empirical, thorough, and reliable. We can be trusted to present the best available evidence on alcohol’s impact on society.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Innovative</p> <p>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.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Collaborative</p> <p>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.</p>

Governance and funding:

IAS is governed by a Board of Trustees and the delivery of IAS's 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. See page 13 for a full list of staff, advisers and trustees.

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 funds from charitable and public health bodies that share our goals and values.



Our framework for policy action

Our work is guided by the World Health Organisation's policy recommendations, outlined in its [Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030](#).¹ These high-impact policies are supported by robust international evidence of effectiveness in tackling alcohol harm:

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

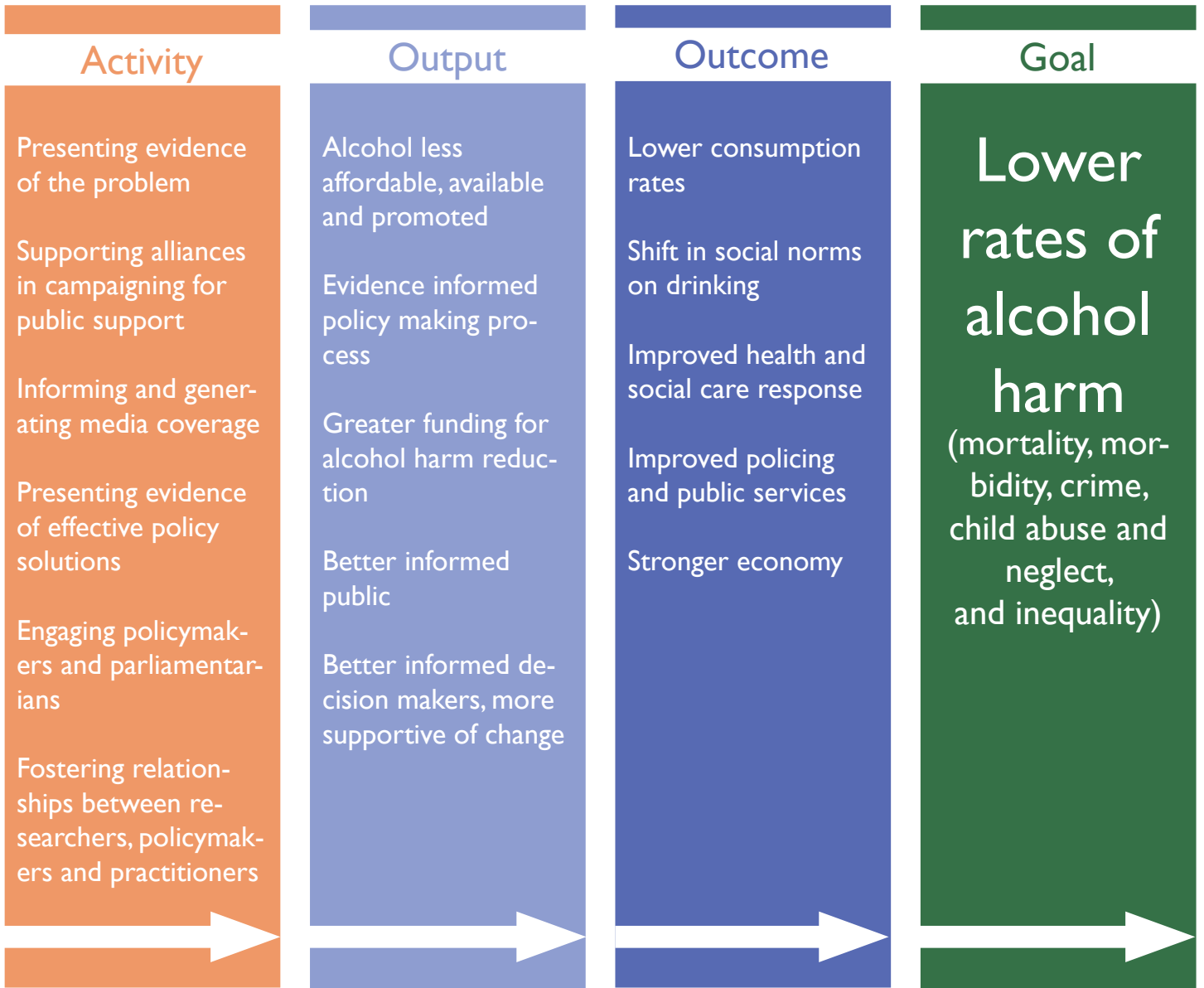
Health service response: provide prevention, treatment and care for alcohol use disorders and comorbid conditions in health and social services

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.² 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.



IAS Strategy 2020-2023:

Overview of achievements

Our previous Strategy set out an ambitious plan focussed around four priority policy areas: marketing, affordability, crime, and social & environmental impacts of alcohol. In the face of significant challenges, including due to the pandemic and political instability, we were able to deliver an impressive programme of work. This included the following activities:

- Publication of high-quality research reports
- Active programme of policy influencing, informing the new HMT/HMRC duty review
- Significant increase in event attendance via webinars
- Successful partnerships with coalitions, in particular the Alcohol Health Alliance
- Launched a new Small Grants Scheme to support early career researchers to develop innovative, policy-relevant research

Main achievements in numbers



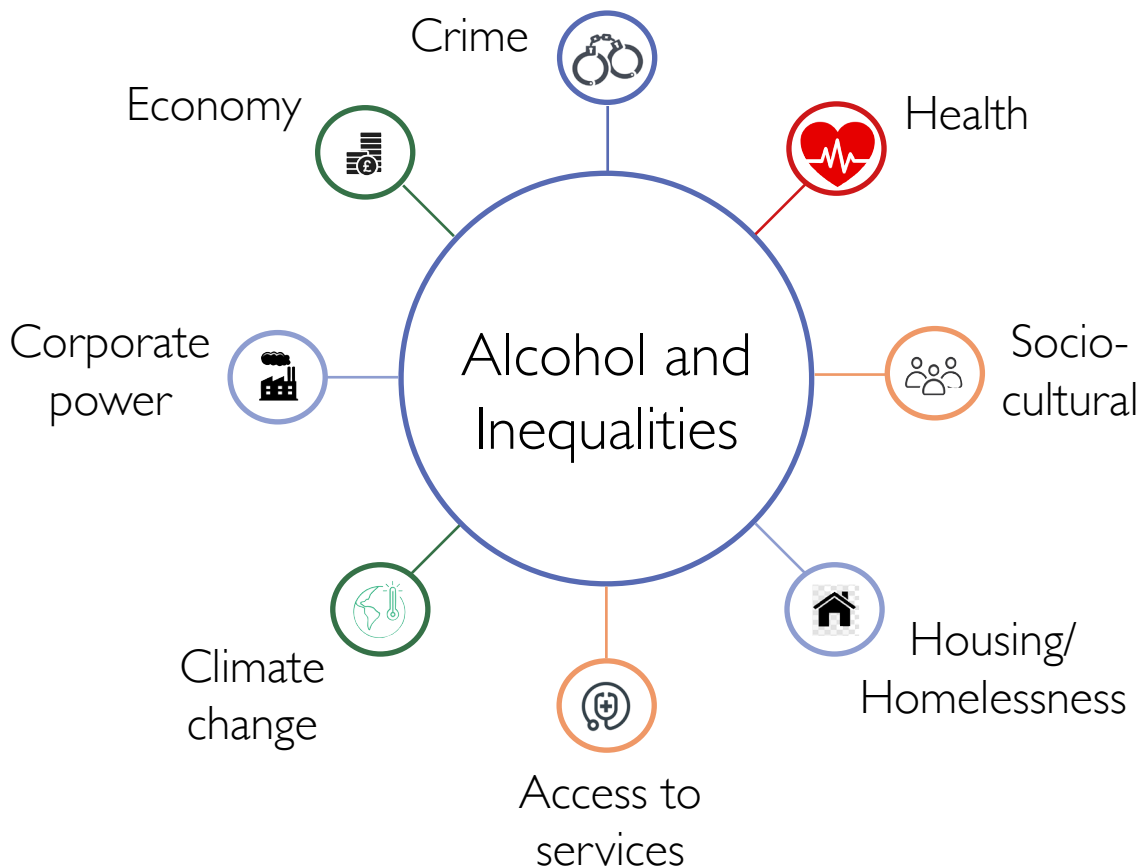
Our challenge for 2023-2026: Addressing alcohol-related inequalities

Alcohol harm continues to adversely affect families, communities and society at large. In the wake of the pandemic, alcohol-related deaths have increased substantially and are currently at an all-time high. Our report [*The COVID Hangover: Addressing the long-term health impacts of changes in consumption during the pandemic*](#) estimates that if current drinking trends

persist, there will be up to 9,914 additional premature deaths in England by 2035, costing the NHS up to £1.2bn.³

The harm caused by alcohol is not equally experienced across society. Evidence consistently shows that the most deprived communities consume less alcohol yet suffer higher

Intersection of alcohol harm and inequalities



rates of alcohol-related health and social problems compared to the least deprived. In England, [alcohol mortality rates in the most deprived areas are more than double those reported in the least](#).⁴ Our report [Inequalities in victimisation: Alcohol, violence and anti-social behaviour](#)⁵ found alcohol-related violence victimisation is disproportionately clustered in the lowest socioeconomic groups, with the most disadvantaged groups experiencing up to five times the prevalence of alcohol-related domestic and acquaintance violence than the most advantaged group. [Research in Scotland has also found a relationship between off-licence density and crime, with deprived areas more likely to be affected](#).⁶

Policies designed to reduce alcohol harm have been shown to benefit lower income groups to a greater extent than higher income groups. For example, [minimum unit pricing is associated with a reduction in alcohol-specific deaths and hospitalisations in the four most socioeconomi-](#)

[cally deprived deciles in Scotland](#).⁷

However, despite clear evidence to support policies that will tackle alcohol-related inequalities, significant barriers exist to their introduction. The influence of commercial interests in UK policymaking, especially linked to multinational alcohol producers, creates a major imbalance of power between public health and private profit. [Evidence shows the alcohol industry is highly strategic, rhetorically sophisticated and well organised in influencing national policymaking](#).⁸

Alcohol harm places significant financial strain on the UK, with [estimated total societal costs between £27-£52bn year](#).⁹ At a time when public finances are stretched, [people from more deprived communities are at greater risk of cuts to funding for public services](#)¹⁰, so now is more important than ever to ensure avoidable costs to our economy are minimised.

IAS Activities

Over the next three years, IAS will work to better understand and raise awareness of the issue of alcohol and inequalities. We will identify barriers to change, including activities of the alcohol industry, and work alongside likeminded organisations that share our goals to advocate for effective policy solutions that will reduce harm and promote equity.

Projects we will deliver to help us achieve our aims include:

- Conduct a Delphi study using a panel of appointed experts to **consider the impact on equity of alcohol policies** and interventions and to **develop recommendations for a national strategy**
- Present data on the **cost of alcohol harm** to Local Authorities in England
- **Development of a language bank**, encompassing terminology and guidance on how to effectively communicate about alcohol and inequalities whilst avoiding terms that create stigma and/or lead to marginalisation of certain groups
- Development of principles of interacting with alcohol industry bodies to identify and mitigate risks associated with **conflicts of interest** in alcohol policy
- Development of **new typologies, using intersectional analysis**, to explore patterns of alcohol use across different social groups
- Research into **corporate harm** in UK alcohol policy
- Exploration of how the current **cost of living crisis** affects alcohol consumption and harm and the experiences of different groups and communities
- A **40th anniversary event**, marking the inception of IAS

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, IAS will continue to conduct the following 'core business' activities, with a focus on Alcohol and Inequalities:

- **Advocate for evidence-based policy** to reduce alcohol harm, using the WHO framework as our guide, and work with partner organisations, via networks and alliances, to campaign for policy change
- Respond to developments in alcohol policy and research via the production of **reports and briefings and host engaging events**
- **Disseminate alcohol news**, including research developments, and produce up to date materials via our website, social media accounts and Alcohol Alert
- **Support early career researchers** by identifying opportunities to promote research to policy audiences and through the Small Grants Scheme.
- **Provide expert advice** to governments, research groups and civil society organisations when requested and proactively seek opportunities to collaborate



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the team at IAS both past and present for its dedication and collaboration.

IAS team in 2023

Dr Katherine Severi	Chief Executive
Dr Sadie Boniface	Head of Research
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Anu Rumm	Parliamentary & Campaigns Officer (AHA)
Kellie Donaldson	Office Manager

Trustees

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 Dr Phil Hadfield
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A special thank you to all former staff and Trustees who supported IAS during the previous strategy, 2020-2023:

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References

1. World Health Organization, [Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030](#).
2. OECD, [Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use: Economics and Public Health Policy](#) (2015).
3. Boniface, S., et al. "[The Covid hangover: addressing long-term health impacts of changes in alcohol consumption during the pandemic.](#)" London: The Institute of Alcohol Studies (2022).
4. Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, [Local Alcohol Profiles for England](#).
5. Bryant, Lucy. [Inequalities in victimisation: alcohol, violence, and anti-social behaviour](#), The Institute of Alcohol Studies (2020)
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9. Burton, R., et al. [The public health burden of alcohol and the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol control policies: an evidence review.](#) (2016).
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