

IAS

Institute of
Alcohol Studies

IAS Strategy

2026-2029

*Securing a healthier
future by tackling
alcohol harm*





Foreword

A message from our Chair



Working to reduce alcohol harm is a rewarding, but often frustrating business.

The most recent Office for National Statistics data show UK alcohol deaths at or close to historical highs. All parts of the UK show higher health and social impacts among people living in deprivation, but the trends are not uniform. Where the World Health

Organization's high impact measures of action on marketing, availability, and particularly price have been utilised, such as in Scotland, lives have been saved, particularly among those living on the lowest incomes.

Effective prevention policy has been repeatedly shown in the UK and elsewhere to reduce the health gap between rich and poor, and one of the frustrations is the reluctance of governments to take actions which have been shown to work.

Alcohol treatment and support services have also fallen down the priority list.

UK research has shown that the public expect the way alcohol is sold and marketed to be regulated. It is seen as a duty of government to moderate the approach of alcohol producers and retailers, particularly supermarkets and large pub chains, whose ambitions will inevitably be to expand sales and profitability. Those who argue for reducing regulation, whether for motives of ideology or self-interest, are out of step with public opinion.

IAS will continue to generate knowledge and to translate the findings of academic research into policy action. We aim to be at the forefront of this throughout the UK and internationally. I hope this report is of interest to you and please let us know what you think of our work.

Dr Peter Rice
Chair

A message from our Chief Executive



Alcohol harm has ascended the political agenda, and there are reasons to be cautiously optimistic.

The UK Government's commitment to introduce mandatory alcohol product labelling represents an important step forward, ensuring that drinkers are no longer

kept in the dark by an industry determined to distract from the evidence linking its products to harm. Proposals to lower the drink driving limit also have the potential to save lives and protect families and communities from avoidable tragedy.

However, much more remains to be done. Alcohol specific deaths remain at unacceptably high levels, inequalities persist, and the UK still lacks a comprehensive, long term approach to tackling alcohol harm.

As our long term vision demonstrates, there is a clear and robust roadmap for action. Grounded in strong evidence, it shows how governments can make a meaningful difference by acting across price, marketing, availability, treatment and governance. Over the next three years, IAS will continue to work towards securing a healthier future – **a society where alcohol harm is rare and equal opportunities for good health and wellbeing exist for all.**

Dr Katherine Severi
Chief Executive

Introduction

Alcohol harm has wide ranging impacts on health, social care, criminal justice and the economy, with the greatest burden falling on people living in more deprived communities. After more than a decade without a national alcohol strategy, and with alcohol specific deaths increasing dramatically since the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for sustained, evidence based action is urgent.

In 2025, IAS published [A Healthier Future: A long term vision to tackle alcohol harm in the UK](#). Developed in collaboration with experts across policy, research and treatment, the report

sets out a shared vision, clear long term targets, and a roadmap for achieving lasting progress. It calls for action to halve risky drinking, reverse rising alcohol deaths, and dramatically improve access to treatment, supported by a coherent package of evidence based policies.

This strategy sets out how IAS will focus its work between 2026 and 2029 to help deliver that long term vision. It aligns our core activities, new projects and partnerships around a single strategic aim: ensuring that evidence is translated into action and that policymakers are supported – and challenged – to act in the public interest.

Executive summary

Alcohol harm is a serious and growing concern in the UK, impacting people's health and wellbeing, the NHS, social services, criminal justice, and our economy. These impacts are felt most by people on low incomes or who live in deprived areas.

With the last UK alcohol strategy published in 2012 and alcohol deaths at an all-time high, **the time for meaningful, evidence based policy action is now**. The limited commitments to prevent alcohol harm in the **10 Year Health Plan** is driving emerging standalone strategy to get to grips with the alcohol emergency. This document, developed by a broad range of experts in policy, research, and treatment, offers a blueprint for a long-term progress.

Our vision is for a society where alcohol harm is rare and equal opportunity for good health and wellbeing is available to all.



Key targets for the next decade:

- 1 Halve the prevalence of risky drinking from **1 in 3** UK adults to **1 in 6**.
- 2 Increase the proportion of people with alcohol dependence accessing specialist alcohol treatment to **50% within 5 years**, and build capacity in the system for **80% of people** with alcohol dependence to have access to treatment within **10 years**.

Reverse the trend of alcohol-specific deaths, returning to the pre-pandemic rate **within 5 years**, and subsequently to 2012 levels **within 10 years**.

Priority recommendations:

- 1 Introduce minimum pricing at **65p per litre** in England and Wales regularly in line with other nations.
- 2 Provide increased and sustained investment in alcohol harm prevention and treatment services.
- 3 Introduce mandatory alcohol product labels that include clear health warnings, ingredients and nutritional information, and the UK low risk drinking guidelines.
- 4 Lower the drink-driving limit across all UK nations.
- 5 Introduce guidelines to manage government interactions with the alcohol industry.

High and growing. Progress requires partnership to create a healthier, more

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 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

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

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

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



Our vision is for a society where alcohol harm is rare and equal opportunities for good health and wellbeing exist for all.



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



Our goals we believe can be achieved through evidence-based policy action over the next decade are:

Halve the prevalence of risky drinking from 1 in 3 UK adults to 1 in 6.

Increase the proportion of people with alcohol dependence accessing specialist alcohol treatment to 50% within 5 years, and build capacity in the system for 80% of people with alcohol dependence to have access to treatment within 10 years.

Reverse the trend of alcohol-specific deaths, returning to the pre-pandemic rate within 5 years, and subsequently to 2012 levels within 10 years.

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 and organisations that share our goals and values.

IAS is a registered charity, number 1112671.



Our people

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 and members of our Research Review Committee help prioritise project funding via our Small Grants Scheme.



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Dr Melissa Oldham
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Professor Jennifer Maggs
Dr Anya Topiwala



Business as usual: what IAS will continue to do

Alongside new areas of work, IAS will continue to deliver a strong programme of core activities that underpin our impact:



Support the promotion of evidence-based policies to reduce alcohol harm



Disseminate alcohol-related research, analysis and commentary through our website, social media, **Alcohol Alert**, and podcast



Support early-career researchers, including through the IAS Small Grants Scheme, by helping to bridge the gap between research and policy



Work collaboratively with partner organisations through networks and alliances – including hosting the **Alcohol Health Alliance** – to campaign for policy change



Provide expert advice to governments, research groups and civil society organisations, both on request and through proactive engagement



Convene the **IAS Expert Advisory Panel** to support the production of high quality, credible and policy relevant outputs



New projects and areas of focus (2026–2029)

Over the next three years, IAS will deliver a programme of new projects designed to address emerging challenges, strengthen the evidence base and support delivery of the long term vision.



Exposing alcohol industry influence and conflicts of interest

Projects exploring alcohol industry links to the UK civil service, mapping approaches to managing conflicts of interest, and investigations into alcohol industry engagement in areas such as prison health and sustainability, will build on IAS's established leadership on governance and industry influence. Together, these projects will provide practical insights for policymakers and reinforce the case for stronger safeguards in public health decision making.



Documenting alcohol's impact on public services

By repeating landmark surveys on alcohol's impact on emergency services and comparing policy approaches across the UK's four nations, IAS will continue to document how alcohol harm is experienced on the frontline and how different policy choices shape outcomes across society.



Responding to changes in alcohol availability and marketing

Projects on alcohol home deliveries, licensing reform, and pub sector attitudes will examine how shifts in the alcohol market affect harm,

recovery and public support for policy action. By combining qualitative research, policy analysis and stakeholder engagement, IAS will generate timely evidence to inform regulation of online sales, licensing systems and alcohol marketing.



Quantifying the benefits of action

We will work with experts to quantify the health and economic benefits of meeting the targets set out in A Healthier Future: A long-term vision to tackle alcohol harm in the UK. This will provide policymakers with robust estimates of the potential gains from action, including impacts across different population groups, and strengthen the case for investing in prevention and treatment.



Strengthening the political case for action

We will draw on first hand reflections from senior policymakers to analyse why past commitments have fallen short and how future governments can overcome longstanding political barriers. This project will complement IAS's long term vision by focusing on how change happens in practice, rather than restating policy asks, and will produce a political manual for effective alcohol policy.

Looking ahead

This strategy reflects IAS's commitment to aligning short term action with long term ambition. By focusing our work around a shared vision for a healthier future, we will continue to generate evidence, shape policy debates and support civil society to push for meaningful change.

Alcohol harm is not inevitable and drinking cultures are not fixed. With political leadership, sustained investment and evidence based policy, it is possible to reduce harm, narrow inequalities and improve health for generations to come. IAS will continue to play its part in making that future a reality.

