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index

Ministerial foreword	ii
Milestones for action	iv
Summary	1
Glossary of terms and abbreviations	6
Chapter 1 – use and misuse of alcohol in Scotland	10
Chapter 2 – action and resources	18
Chapter 3 – culture change	28
Chapter 4 – prevention and education	38
Chapter 5 – provision of services	48
Chapter 6 – protection and controls	58
Chapter 7 – delivery	68
Summary of main action points	78
Appendix 1 – statistics on alcohol in Scotland	82
Appendix 2 – studies and reports published alongside the Plan	100

ministerial foreword

Alcohol is widely used and enjoyed in Scotland. The drinks industry and the licensed trade make valuable contributions to our economy. Drinking small amounts of alcohol is compatible with a healthy lifestyle. Drinking too much can, however, lead to illness, accidents and anti-social and criminal behaviour.




In 1999 we announced targets to reduce drinking over sensible limits by 2005. The independent Scottish Advisory Committee on Alcohol Misuse was set up later that year to advise the Executive on a new national strategy to tackle alcohol problems. The Committee brings together experts from many sectors with an interest including the industry. I am very grateful to them for their assistance in developing this Plan.

There is already some good work to address alcohol problems across Scotland. However, there are some concerning upward trends. Young Scots are drinking more than ever before. The effects at an early age can be very serious. Binge drinking is also increasing and can harm individuals and society more generally. We are responsible for our personal behaviour and the impact it has on our families and communities. We estimate that alcohol problems are costing Scotland at least £1 billion each year. We need to tackle these problems.

We committed the Executive to publish this Plan in the Scottish Parliament a year ago. It was noted then that, to reduce the harm caused by alcohol, we must also acknowledge its place in Scottish society. Changing cultures surrounding drinking involves and affects everyone and underpins all other action in the Plan.


We have consulted widely and many who responded identified the same concerns and agreed on what needs to be done. The Plan builds on this consensus and sets out action for a range of organisations and individuals including the Executive, NHS boards, local authorities, the police, the drinks industry and licensed trade, businesses and the voluntary sector.



What matters is what works. Action here is based on evidence of what is effective including what is known from other countries. The Plan is also linked to our wider health improvement agenda, and to other relevant Executive strategies.

Our aims are ambitious. Changes in attitudes and behaviour cannot be accomplished overnight. It will take time to improve support and treatment services. The chart that follows sets out some key dates and early priorities for action.

The challenge is great but so is the opportunity. I believe that this Plan for Action offers a chance to reduce significantly the harm caused by alcohol in Scotland.



Malcolm Chisholm, MSP
Minister for Health and Community Care

milestones for action

By December 2005

Targets to reduce drinking over weekly limits by adults and children

By December 2003

Executive review of progress in delivering this Plan

By April 2003

AMCC strategies for 2003-2006 published

Autumn 2002

AMCC accountability process agreed

March - April 2002

National communications strategy launched
Executive provides additional resources for AMCCs
Consultation on framework for alcohol problems support and treatment services
Review of the membership of SACAM
Community Safety Partnership funding to address alcohol-related crime

February 2002

National alcohol liaison officer in post

January 2002

Executive provides funding to develop a national alcohol information resource

The action in this Plan will roll-out over different timescales. The key dates are set out above.