Seema Kennedy MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU  

17 July 2019

Dear Minister,

Re: Call from health professionals for a new alcohol strategy for England

We write as representative bodies of health professionals across the country. Our members include doctors, nurses and midwives working in the NHS to deliver vital health services to patients of all ages and across all of society. As the responsible Government Minister we are calling on you to prioritise producing a new alcohol strategy.

We are greatly concerned by the growing impact that alcohol is having on the health of the nation. Alcohol is readily available, increasingly affordable and heavily marketed as an accepted part of modern life. Yet the health harms of alcohol are widely known. Healthcare professionals witness these harms in their everyday working lives. In England in 2016 there were 5,800 alcohol-specific deaths and over 1.2 million alcohol-related hospital admissions, both increasing from the previous year.

The Government last published an alcohol strategy in 2012, however since then, responsibility for commissioning alcohol treatment services has moved to local authorities. This coincided with repeated cuts to the public health grant, which is limiting the ability of local authorities to deliver alcohol and drug treatment services.

Since 2014/15, the number of alcohol-related hospital admissions each year has increased by over 100,000, a worryingly high increase of 8%. Despite this, fewer people are accessing treatment even though evidence shows that it is effective for an increasing proportion of people.

Government has produced recent strategies for tackling the harms caused by obesity and tobacco, while for alcohol there has been a lack of strategic focus. We therefore ask that government prioritises alcohol in the same manner and works to urgently produce an updated and ambitious national alcohol strategy to tackle this escalating risk to public health.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatures]

Professor Dame Parveen Kumar  
Chair, BMA Board of Science

Dr Taj Hassan  
President, Royal College of Emergency Medicine
Gill Walton
Chief Executive, Royal College of Midwives

Dame Professor Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive & General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing

Professor Lesley Regan
President, Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

Professor Jo Martin
President, Royal College of Pathologists

Professor Andrew Goddard
President, Royal College of Physicians

Dr Adrian James
Registrar, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Dr Nicola Strickland
President, Royal College of Radiologists