

11 March 2008

## Raising the bar – tackling alcohol abuse together

Next steps in the regional approach to combating excessive drinking will be discussed at an event to be held later this week.

*Raising the Bar – Tackling Alcohol Misuse in the North East* will take place at Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgefield, County Durham, on Thursday (Mar 13).

It is being organised by the Public Health and Community Safety teams at Government Office for the North East.

Speakers include Northumbria Police chief constable Michael Craik, Government Office for the North East deputy regional director Judith Million and Dr Stephen Singleton, regional director of public health.

Dr Singleton said: “Alcohol misuse has far reaching effects, not only for the individual concerned but also that person’s family, the NHS and the community as a whole.

“We know we have a problem in the North East - but there are no easy answers.

“We strongly believe that a coordinated approach from all interested parties is needed, something we highlighted in our *Better Health, Fairer Health* strategy launched last month.

“Events such as *Raising the Bar* are important because it means we can get together, share experiences, plan a way forward – and galvanise each other into action. We know there is a real desire to improve the situation.”

Judith Million added: "The Government has set out a clear message on the harm caused by alcohol on personal health and community safety in particular.

“We know the role that drink-fuelled behaviour plays in crime and anti-social behaviour. In 46% of all violent assaults, the victim believed the offender to be under the influence.

“Just over a quarter of people think that drunk and rowdy behaviour is a problem in their area. Communities do not want to have to put up with it.

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“So we have made it our priority to deliver real and tangible reductions in the harm that alcohol causes. To be truly effective, we need to work in partnership, with a renewed sense of purpose.”

More than 200 delegates from local authorities, the police, voluntary organisations, the NHS, the prison service and the probation service will attend.

A theatre group will perform a short play about harmful drinking in ‘middle England’ as part of the programme.

The conference follows the publication of *Safe, Sensible, Social: next steps in the national alcohol strategy*.

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