

Safe Drinking and Harm Reduction Policy

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1. Scope

This policy applies to everything NUSU does as a service provider, representative body and an employer. It covers conduct at our premises as well as related meetings, events and activity off campus.

2. Definition

Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes, and practices that aim to minimise negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use (including alcohol), policies and laws. It is focused on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support. It can be contrasted with primary prevention, which aims to prevent people using drugs or to stop them using once they have started. At its core, harm reduction acknowledges that, while the use of drugs always carries risks, there are ways of reducing the likelihood that harm will occur. Harm reduction policy does not intend to signal that drug use is safe, but rather to recognise that there are behaviours which actively increase the risk of harm. Furthermore, a policy of harm reduction recognises that education about these dangers and the availability of support can make drug use safer. Harm reduction policies do not exempt drug users from UK drug laws or disciplinary procedures.

3. NUSU Stance

Newcastle University Students' Union ('NUSU') does not condone or encourage the improper use of substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 or the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. NUSU maintains that this behaviour will always carry some risk of harm to students. However, NUSU does acknowledge that students living in a vibrant city will likely find themselves in new situations and faced with new decisions. NUSU understands that it is unlikely that all students will always make the safest decision all of the time.

While there is not a completely "safe" way to use controlled substances there are ways which increase the risk of harm. NUSU believes that a zero-tolerance policy can hinder engagement with services and information that may otherwise reduce the risk of this harm occurring. Our approach is therefore based in the principles of harm reduction and the belief that informed decisions can reduce the incidence of higher risk behaviours by students.

The materials made available by NUSU do not constitute or replace medical advice. Students are also reminded that substance use may not only put their health at risk, but could result in them committing criminal offences under the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) or [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#). NUSU's approach to harm reduction provides no defence to the criminal law or NUSU/University disciplinary procedures.

4. Drinks Service in NUSU Licensed Areas

Responsible Retailing Note- NUSU's licensed areas also operate using the Drugs at the Door Policy.

Consumer Safe Drinking

- Our main consumers are students. It is our view that they are adults and we are not here to dictate or control their actions or choices

- Our general policy is one of awareness and education. We aim to use our knowledge of how to market effectively to Students to get key messages over regarding their safety and well being, by providing relevant and timely information.
- We will adhere to all legislation including the Licencing Act 2003 (Mandatory Licensing Conditions) Order 2010

Promotions

- The responsible person must ensure that staff on relevant premises do not carry out, arrange or participate in any irresponsible promotions in relation to the premises.
- NUSU follows the mandatory conditions of the Licensing act 2003 and completes risk assessment in relation to the promotional activity to ensure that the four fundamental licensing objectives are promoted at all times.

An irresponsible promotion means any one or more of the following activities, or substantially similar activities, carried on for the purpose of encouraging the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises -

Games or other activities which require or encourage, or are designed to require or encourage, individuals to

- drink a quantity of alcohol within a time limit (other than to drink alcohol sold or supplied on the premises before the cessation of the period in which the responsible person is authorised to sell or supply alcohol), or drink as much alcohol as possible (whether within a time limit or otherwise)
- provision of unlimited or unspecified quantities of alcohol free or for a fixed or discounted fee to the public or to a group defined by a particular characteristic in a manner which carries a significant risk of undermining a licensing objective;
- provision of free or discounted alcohol or any other thing as a prize to encourage or reward the purchase and consumption of alcohol over a period of 24 hours or less in a manner which carries a significant risk of undermining a licensing objective;
- selling or supplying alcohol in association with promotional posters or flyers on, or in the vicinity of, the premises which can reasonably be considered to condone, encourage or glamorise anti-social behaviour or to refer to the effects of drunkenness in any favourable manner.
- Dispensing alcohol directly by one person into the mouth of another (other than where that other person is unable to drink without assistance by reason of disability).

Drink measures

The responsible person must ensure that where any of the following alcoholic drinks are sold or supplied for consumption on the premises (other than alcoholic drinks sold or supplied having been made up in advance ready for sale or supply in a securely closed container) it is available to customers in the following measures –

- beer or cider: ½ pint;
- gin, rum, vodka or whisky: 25 ml or 35 ml; and 50ml
- still wine in a glass: 125 ml;

Non-alcoholic drinks

- The responsible person must ensure that free potable water is provided on request to customers where it is reasonably available.
- Non-alcoholic drinks are available at the same, or lower, price than equivalent alcoholic drinks, including promotions.

Drink Spiking

- We will always make available information and warnings on the symptoms of drink spiking throughout the year. Information and materials to be given from the Wellbeing and Equality Officer but should also be supported by the senior

leadership team.

Binge Drinking

Binge drinking – having a lot of alcohol in a short space of time – can be extremely dangerous. Our bodies can only process roughly one unit of alcohol an hour - and less for some people.

By drinking a lot quickly, the amount of alcohol in your bloodstream can stop your body from working properly. This puts you at greater risk of accidents, alcohol poisoning and other short- and long-term health issues.

The NHS defines binge drinking as ‘drinking heavily over a short space of time’. Another way of thinking about it is ‘drinking to get drunk’.

More than 8 units of alcohol in a single session for males, or more than 6 units in a single session for females is the technical definition. That’s equivalent to about four pints of normal strength beer for a man or three pints for a woman.

We know that the risks of short-term harms like accidents or injuries increase between two to five times as a result of drinking between 5 and 7 units of alcohol in a single drinking session, compared with not drinking any alcohol at all - Drink Aware.co.uk

Binge drinking can lead to drunkenness on the premises or in the vicinity and can be encouraged through irresponsible drinks promotions such as encouraging people to consume more alcohol than planned or to consume more alcohol in a short space of time. A responsible approach to drinks promotions and compliance with the spirit of the mandatory conditions on irresponsible drinks promotions can prevent customers from getting drunk.

- We will refuse service of alcohol product to those participating in excessive drinking or those who have already drunk too much, and either ask them to leave the premises or we will encourage them to have a soft drink or water as appropriate.

Shots

We recognise that the service of shooter drinks could be considered part of a binge drinking mentality. However, when used responsibly these add a fun element to events appreciated by the majority of customers. The following measures apply to this specific type of service:

- Staff briefed to preclude those who appear to have already consumed excessive alcohol, required by law under the Licensing Act 2003, it is an offence to knowingly serve alcohol to a drunk person, or to obtain alcohol for a drunk person on a licensed premises.
- All spirits at 40% ABV will be diluted at least to the ratio of 50/50% with an appropriate non-alcoholic mixer.
- Service limited to a single measure.
- There will be no competition elements that involve volume or speed incentives.

Under 18s

- Young persons aged under 18 years old are allowed access to Newcastle University Students Union entertainments (subject to individual events licensing regulations) but in line with the law, they are not able to purchase alcohol. 16 and 17 year olds can consume (but not purchase) beer, wine or cider with a meal.
- Certain events that are for over 18s only are advertised as so.
- All bar and security staff are instructed to check the identification of anybody they suspect as under 18 years old during training.
- Any person found purchasing or attempting to purchase alcohol for an under 18 year old will be subject to Newcastle University Students Union disciplinary procedure as will any under 18 year old attempting to purchase alcohol.

Age Checks

On all events that are open to the public the Union shall operate ‘Challenge 21’ ID checks with acceptable forms of ID being:

- Passports
- Driving Licences (provisional or full)
- Valid ‘check 21’ cards

Local authority accreditation scheme

- We will work with the local authority on their current accreditation scheme including any associated programmes such as Shout Up.

NUSU Events at External Venues

- When hiring an external venue for an event like the graduation ball, the responsible officer will ensure that there is water available at the table as well as alcoholic beverages.
- It will be the external venues responsibility to not serve alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 or those already intoxicated in line with licensing laws.

5. Training Summary

We have a commitment to the development of our people throughout all levels of the organisation, and believe training and development strengthens our operation as well as ensuring compliance with legal and self-imposed service standards.

Licensed areas

All bar staff are given a minimum of 8 hours induction training prior to working on any of our bars, this includes training on the legal (and operational) need to refuse service. It also provides methods of refusing service to increase staff confidence in doing so.

Additional training and pre-session briefing takes place as a focus on drink awareness campaign periods, including the critical Freshers period, drug awareness and harm reduction.

Staff will receive responsible service of alcohol training and sign off Liquor Indemnity Forms to ensure they abide by the following act; Weights and Measures Act (intoxicating liquor) Order 1988 and the Licensing Act 2003

Freshers Week Volunteers

All crew will receive training, updated and delivered in collaboration annually with the Wellbeing and Equality Officer, prior to events which will include:

Risk assessments for city bar tours, banning the use of devices that encourage binge drinking and all crew/supervisors are banned from initiating drinking games with Freshers at all times. Crew are also banned from taking part in or encouraging drinking games whilst on duty.

What to do if a student has had too much to drink and harm reduction training to look for signs of overdose or students in a difficult situation

The importance of their role and that they are an ambassador of the Union and University and drinking alcohol is not permitted while acting as a volunteer.

Appropriate crew will receive information on the support services available to students to pass this information onto students. Under 18s are not permitted to be a Freshers Volunteer.

Officers

All officers of Newcastle University Students Union will be trained on the support services available to students and the contents of this policy.

Clubs and Societies

All club committee members and relevant society committee members are required to complete Dangerous Behaviours training and are made aware of the Code of Conduct as well as the protocol for dangerous behaviours at organised student socials.

Information can be found [here](#).

6. Campaigning

We will run a number of campaigns during an academic year focused on providing information about key issues at key times.

Examples of campaigns include:

- Drug and Alcohol Harm reduction
- Drink Aware
- Sexual Health
- Mental Health and Substance Use

Alongside this we will be a member of the SOS-UK Alcohol and Drug Impact Programme.

7. Dangerous Behaviours and Initiations

The Students' Union (NUSU) want all students to enjoy their time at Newcastle University and our ambition is to have a positive impact on every student at Newcastle University. In this, we wish to support the safety and wellbeing of all of our students both on- and off-campus, so all students can enjoy University life and participate in the many student led events and activities that we, and our students, value so much.

When we talk about initiations within a university setting, we are usually describing an outdated tradition that requires new members of a club, society or group to undertake what can be dangerous and humiliating tasks set by others. We believe that membership to a club, society or taking part in any activity should not include rituals and there is a ban in place for this type of behaviour.

Students' Union Code of conduct.

The following code of conduct gives clarity on how these events and activities should be run to safeguard the wellbeing and safety of our students:

1. Events or activities which involve tacit or explicit improper coercion or manipulation of students to their physical or mental detriment, or which compromise human dignity, have no place in the University community.
2. No member of the University community should ever feel compelled or pressurised to participate in an activity which may compromise their physical or mental wellbeing or dignity.
3. No-one should be subject to ridicule or exclusion if they decline to participate in an activity.
4. The following Activities or behaviours are forbidden on student socials: Forced alcohol consumption Forced substance consumption Forced physical challenge or physically risky behaviour Forced humiliation Dangerous and / or criminal activity Taking improper advantage of any students as a result of imbalance of power / position.

The term 'forced' applies to any instance where an individual feels pressurised or believes that they must participate in order to be accepted in a group situation.

How to report a concern

The Students' Union and University work together in tackling and responding to reports of initiations/dangerous behaviours and will share information as part of this protocol.

- **Students' Union Complaints**
If you witness an initiation at a club or society event, you can formally report it to the Students' Union using its online [complaints form](#).

Newcastle University Complaints

The University do not allow initiations, and will investigate those involved.

To make a formal report of an initiation you've experienced or witnessed, you can email the Student Progress Service on casework@newcastle.ac.uk. They have a disciplinary procedure that you can read for [more guidance](#).

8. Advice and Support

Support in the Students' Union

Welfare and Support Centre

At the Welfare & Support Centre (Ground floor of the Students' Union) we welcome students to drop-in to chat, get information about local services, as well as to receive a range of resources including drug testing kits, information booklets and use of an amnesty bin. Another of the services offered is a referral into NTaR (Newcastle Treatment and Recovery). NTaR offer extended brief intervention advice to people with low level substance misuse. Students can receive sessions to help identify triggers and high-risk situations and encourage healthy coping strategies to support reduction.

Students' Union Activities (Clubs and Societies)

We understand how important Societies and Clubs can be to the university experience but are also very passionate about eliminating any type of dangerous behaviours and initiations. The team can offer advice and support on the options available and support with the process throughout.

Welfare Officers in Clubs and Societies are passionate about the activities they are involved in and have had formal training on how to offer initial support to students. They can also signpost and support members through options available elsewhere.

Students' Union Student Advice Centre (SAC)

The SAC can help support students by providing a confidential and independent place for students to book in to speak to an Adviser. They can also help with any practical support when experiences can impact on aspects of life such as housing, finance, academic. They can advise on what options and support is available within the Students' Union, the University and the wider community. They are an independent and confidential service.

University Wellbeing support

University Student Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS)

Wellbeing needs will change throughout time at university and Student Wellbeing can offer support needed at every stage of studying. University Student Wellbeing Service information [here](#).

9. How to raise a report about breaches of the policy

- If you need to report an issue, there is more than one way you can do this. You can check out the Union & University reporting pathways in our pages [here](#). The Support and Advice Hub can help to talk this through.

10. Related Documents and Policy

- [University Policy Page](#)
- [Licensing Documents](#)
- [Students Union Policy A-Z](#)

Review Date

This policy to be reviewed every three years by the Wellbeing and Equality Officer, Director of Membership Services and Director of Commercial.

REVISION HISTORY

Rev.	Date	OWNER	APPROVAL	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
	May 2024	KH	GW/GH	Review and update