



## Press Release

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**For immediate release**

### **Hemel Hempstead MP gains first-hand insight into work of drug and alcohol services during visit to local charity Druglink**

Sir Mike Penning MP gained first-hand insights into the work carried out by alcohol and drug services during a visit to the local residential detox and rehabilitation unit Oxygen Recovery on 25 January 2019.

This visit was organised by the Alcohol Health Alliance UK (AHA) and the Hertfordshire-based charity Druglink, which run Oxygen Recovery. Visiting the service and speaking to staff and residents, Mr Penning learned about Oxygen Recovery and discussed what can be done to help minimise the chance of addiction and what other treatment services could help people in need of support.

Residents told Mr Penning how they felt it was important to educate people, especially from a young age, about the side effects of alcohol and other drugs. They said young people need to understand how substances affect not only them but their family, friends and everyone around them. Druglink run educational workshops in secondary schools and colleges, delivering the knowledge to help people make sensible decisions with the aim to prevent possible issues with substances in the future.

Better labelling of alcohol products was also discussed as another way to increase consumer awareness and knowledge. Currently, less than 1 in 5 people in the UK know that the Chief Medical Officers recommend not to drink more than 14 units a week to keep risks low. Support for more information is high: 70% of the UK public want warnings that exceeding the drinking guidelines can damage one's health to be displayed on alcohol labels as a legal requirement.

Mr Penning heard that the government needs to act quickly to reduce alcohol harm, for example by providing more funding for effective alcohol treatment, driving education and introducing health warnings on alcohol labels.

#### **Speaking at the visit, Mike Penning MP said:**

"It was great to visit Oxygen Recovery today and see the work the team at Druglink are doing to help people with their recovery from addiction. Education plays a key role and we need to make sure that students and young adults are aware of the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. I am looking forward to working with Druglink to help spread awareness."

#### **Derek Heath, joint Chief Executive Officer of Druglink, said:**

"We're delighted that Sir Mike Penning came to visit Druglink today. We try to offer as much treatment, support and guidance as possible to those with substance-misuse issues, but we're a small charity with limited resources. Today's visit from Mr Penning has helped us build awareness of all the work that is being carried out in this sector, and enables us to



discuss what more can be done to help those who need us and work towards harm reduction.”

**Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance, commented:**

“Alcohol has become one the three biggest lifestyle risk factors for disease and death in the UK. To help change that, we need to make sure people are better informed about the dangers of alcohol consumption. Our research shows that less than 10% of alcohol labels inform consumers about the low-risk drinking guidelines and none have specific health warnings. The current self-regulation systems for alcohol labelling is not working. We need the government to take action and introduce a requirement for alcohol labelling in the forthcoming Alcohol Strategy.”

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**Notes to the Editor**

- Currently, there are more than one million hospital admissions and 24,000 deaths related to alcohol every year in England. Alcohol is estimated to cost the NHS £3.5billion every year.
- Figures about knowledge of the drinking guidelines and support for better labelling are taken from: Alcohol Health Alliance (2018): [How we drink, what we think. Public views on alcohol and alcohol policies in the UK.](#)
- Druglink is a substance misuse charity based in Hertfordshire. Their objective is to make a positive impact on the lives of those misusing alcohol and other drugs, their families and their communities. They do this through their pathway of prevention, recovery and reintegration. Along each step of the pathway they provide a range of both proactive and responsive services. These include education, training, Diversion schemes in partnership with UK Police Forces, rehab and recovery and work experience opportunities. Coffee Ethic, their social enterprise, offers vulnerable people the opportunity to learn new skills and build confidence through a programme of training and personal development. For more information contact Emma Kingham on [emmakingham@druglink.ltd.uk](mailto:emmakingham@druglink.ltd.uk) or call 01442 800 918. [www.druglink.co.uk](http://www.druglink.co.uk).
- Druglink is a member of the Alcohol Health Alliance, a national alliance of 50 organisations which work to reduce the harms caused by alcohol. Members include medical royal colleges, charities, patient representatives and alcohol health campaigners. For further information, contact Sarah Schoenberger on [sarah.schoenberger@ahauk.org](mailto:sarah.schoenberger@ahauk.org) or 020 7222 4001.