



**Category:** Public Affairs Campaign

**Company:** Gardiner Richardson and Balance, the North East Alcohol Office

**Entry title:** Cheap White Cider – Time for Action

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**Brief and objectives:**

**Campaign brief**

White cider is one of the most harmful alcohol products drunk by vulnerable groups seeking alcohol at the cheapest possible price.

A price report launched by Balance and partners found that due to the current tax system, high-strength white ciders are the cheapest products per unit. In the North East, 3ltr bottles containing as much alcohol as 22 shots of vodka cost as little as £3.99.

Spurred on by political, partner, public and mainstream media reaction to the release of the price report, early 2017 presented an opportunity to call on the Chancellor to increase duty on cheap white cider in the Spring Budget.

We developed a campaign to engage key political stakeholders and achieve mainstream media backing, build advocacy and lobby for taxation changes to tackle the issue.

**Objectives**

- Increase taxes on cheap white cider
- Raise awareness of harms of white cider
- Generate support for campaign and public and political advocacy ahead of Budget
- Increase engagement and reach across Balance and partner channels.

**Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**

Evidence of the harms of cheap white cider underpinned our campaign including:

- White ciders are often the drinks of choice for heavy drinkers and children.
- Alcohol is a factor in 1million+ hospital admissions annually, accounting for 10% of the total UK burden of death and disease.

- Public Health England reported 167,000 years of working life lost to alcohol in 2015, more than the ten most frequent types of cancer combined. The cost to society is estimated as £52 billion.
- The North East has the highest rates of drinking amongst 11-15 year olds.

Case studies showing the real impact of cheap white cider were vital to obtaining the backing of politicians and the public.

The campaign was built around protecting young people, but needed to bring home the harms.

This was illustrated by 16-year-old Megan Craig-Wilkinson, who died in her sleep after drinking half a bottle of white cider at a friends' New Year's Eve party. Megan's mum Joanne spoke out on the issue.

A collective partnership was stronger than a standalone campaign. We worked with national and regional partners, backed by Joanne, the Alcohol Health Alliance, charities and politicians.

### **Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:**

We created a people-first campaign and brought to life headlines with case studies that generated an emotional response.

Concentrating efforts on one key policy ask – increased taxes on white cider – helped us keep focus.

We had to keep our messaging simple:

- Parents have a right to know how dangerous white cider is.
- It's too cheap.
- To protect children, we need to see increases in duty on cheap white cider.

### **Tactics included:**

- **A Mother's Story** – Joanne Good's story brought the campaign to the attention of politicians, the mainstream media and wider public. Joanne shared her story at a Parliamentary event.
- **Media partner** – Mirror reporter Jeremy Armstrong was offered Joanne's story as an exclusive. The Mirror and Mirror online covered stories on white cider 10 times in one month.
- **Parliamentary event** – organised by the Alcohol Health Alliance, a parliamentary event was attended by 18 MPs and three peers.
- **Letters to the Chancellor** – MPs, health partners, charities, Directors of Public Health and police officers called for increased taxes.
- **On the frontline** – PC Claire McNaney shared some of the horrifying effects she had personally witnessed, generating widespread coverage.

- **Social media** – Infographics highlighted stats, case studies were repurposed for social, alcohol policy influencers were targeted via Twitter. A social media ‘takeover’ with online banners and the consistent use of the hashtag #Budget2017 kept us front of mind.
- **Videos** – including stories of a local GP who sees the harms of cheap cider first hand, Joanne Good and PC Claire McNaney.

**Partner toolkit** – including web and newsletter copy, suggested social media posts and campaign background. Issued to key partners, including NHS Trusts and local authorities, with a call to help back the campaign.

### **Implementation of tactics:**

Preparation for the Spring Budget began in October 2016 with the price report, which highlighted how cheaply alcohol is being sold.

We increased momentum leading up to the Budget and focused efforts on a concentrated campaign period throughout February and March.

Activity peaked around the Parliamentary event on 22<sup>nd</sup> February where Joanne’s story was launched.

We capitalised on opportunities which presented themselves, for example MP Mary Glendon posing a question on white cider at PMQs.

### **Outline the distinct role and results of public affairs and lobbying:**

The Parliamentary event was attended by 18 MPs. Joanne’s local MP raised the issue at PMQs.

The issue was championed by MPs from David Burrowes to Ed Milliband. Police Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Barry Coppinger, publicly backed the campaign.

On the day of the Budget, as well as planned tax increases to alcohol products across the board, a consultation was launched.

The consultation closed on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 and we are awaiting the results.

### **Measurement and evaluation:**

The launch of a consultation into increasing the tax band for white cider is a positive step forward.

**Campaign generated** 157 pieces of coverage.

**OTS (print, online and broadcast):** 32,775,297

**ROI:** 142:1

**National media:**

- The Mirror: ran 10 separate pieces. One online piece alone generated 250k reach.
- Sky Radio, Metro, Daily Mail, Daily Star, The Sun, ITV online.

**Local media:**

- BBC Radio Newcastle, The Chronicle, The Journal, Northern Echo, News Guardian, Capital Radio, Metro Radio, Sunderland Echo, Shields Gazette, Hartlepool Mail, Northumberland Gazette.

**Wider regionals:**

- PA syndicated the story taking the campaign beyond its North East roots.

**Social**

- 136,460 reach and 2,108 interactions across Balance's Facebook / Twitter.
- Thousands of interactions on social media, with hundreds of comments on national news Facebook feeds – driving debate on key issues.

**Wider outcomes**

Joanne was personally invited onto the This Morning sofa. She is now looking to raise more awareness to young people in schools.

**Budget and cost effectiveness:**

Cost effectiveness was secured because of the impact of the campaign, the political movement that resulted and the public support for increased taxes on cheap white cider.