Rt. Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

17th July 2013

Dear Secretary of State

**RE: Public Health Responsibility Deal**

We are very disappointed by your decision not to introduce minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol. We believe it to be an evidence-based and proportionate policy. International experience as well as robust modelling has shown that a minimum unit price in England can reduce alcohol related deaths and should be a key part of any alcohol strategy. As you know, alcohol is a major risk factor for cancer, responsible for around 12,500 cases in the UK each year, and linked to some of the hardest to treat cancers including oesophageal cancer.

In light of this decision, we believe the Government’s policy response on alcohol is woefully inadequate and unlikely to achieve the positive health impact we need to reduce the burden of preventable ill health caused by excess alcohol consumption.

The decision not to proceed with MUP, alongside the decision to stall on the introduction of standardised packaging for tobacco, highlights an unwillingness to show leadership on public health. This is particularly disappointing in light of your stated ambition to reduce premature mortality. We fail to see how this ambition will be realised in the absence of leadership and a willingness to rapidly adopt effective, evidenced – and popular – public health measures.

We are also concerned that the Government has bowed to strong pressure from the tobacco and alcohol industries not to introduce these policies. This undermines the Government’s primary responsibility to protect the health of its citizens.

It is therefore with regret that we have decided to withdraw from your Responsibility Deal. As a result of today’s decision, the Responsibility Deal remains the only mechanism left to reduce the health harms of alcohol. We joined the Deal in good faith. We were told that this approach would complement Government policy, not replace it. The Deal was intended to focus on areas where industry action could be more effective and quicker than legislation. However, on its own it cannot hope to make a serious contribution to public health.
From the outset we have expressed disappointment with the alcohol pledges. They are not evidence based and lack clear, measurable outcomes. In the two years since the Deal was launched, we have yet to see any evidence that it has improved public health or that this approach is more effective than legislation. As a result we have lost confidence that it will have a positive impact on health.

We hope you reconsider this approach and would be happy to discuss how government can recover its leadership on public health.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Woolnough
Executive Director of Policy and Information
Cancer Research UK

cc Mr. Norman Lamb MP, Minister for Care and Support
Ms. Anna Soubry MP, Under-Secretary of State for Health
Dr. Felicity Hervey CBE, Director General for Public Health
Ms. Liz Woodeson CBE, Director of Health and Wellbeing