The ‘Public Health Responsibility Deal’ published this week sends mixed messages on the Government’s commitment to improving public health and is unlikely to force the pace of change needed to tackle alcohol abuse in particular. According to an oral health charity, the British Dental Health Foundation is concerned that the voluntary nature of the pledges to improve public health are soft options and likely to be overlooked in favour of commercial considerations.

Studies in Scotland have shown that the alcohol industry completely flouts the ban on encouraging young people to drink and has sophisticated and costly campaigns to snare the young and encourage binge drinking. The industry simply has too much at stake and cannot be trusted on these issues with the nation’s health.

The BDHF points to the Government’s own statistics on alcohol abuse to justify a different approach to improving public health. In its recent White Paper – ‘Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England’ – the Government estimated that alcohol abuse costs the NHS £2.7 billion each year.

Not good news for oral health