

Newsletter from Alcohol Focus Scotland

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September 2023

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UPDATE

Parliament must come together to renew and reinvigorate MUP

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on their proposal to maintain and uprate minimum unit pricing (MUP) to 65p per unit, following the publication of their report on its effectiveness.

Since it was introduced in Scotland in 2018, MUP has been linked to an estimated 3% reduction in alcohol consumption, a 4.1% reduction in hospital admissions and a 13.4% reduction in deaths directly caused by alcohol.

increase in the MUP level is now needed to maintain its positive impacts, and failing to link MUP to rising inflation will cost more lives in the future.

Laura Mahon, deputy chief executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland, welcomed the Scottish Government's announcement: "With the recent rise in alcohol deaths, and the impact of the pandemic we need the Scottish Parliament to come together once again to renew and reinvigorate MUP. It is not enough for MUP to be retained. Unless there is support to increase the price, the positive effects we've seen will be reversed, condemning hundreds more people to unnecessary suffering and loss."

The consultation closes on 22 November 2023. Alcohol Focus Scotland has developed a list of resources to help people respond.

 [Read more](#)

 [Access the list and respond to the consultation](#)



UPDATE

Majority support 'nanny state' policies to improve Britain's health outcomes

According to think tank the Social Market Foundation (SMF), Brits largely support public health interventions like bans on advertising, regulating food prices, and affordability limits on gambling.

SMF has published two of three papers exploring tobacco, alcohol, obesity, and gambling policy. The **first paper** compares different types of policy approach, and concludes that more 'interventionist' and apparently politically challenging measures, such as strict regulations on availability and taxes, tend to be more effective.

The **second paper** explores the political opportunities and constraints around action on tobacco, alcohol, obesity, and gambling. SMF analysed several public opinions polls

advertising bans – like limiting the exposure of children to alcohol advertising on social media. People are also more likely to agree that alcohol and tobacco duties are ‘too low’ or ‘just about right’ compared to other taxes, making them among the most popular of any taxes.

SMF suggests that resistance from industry, party colleagues, and the media are bigger obstacles to implementing public health interventions than voter opposition.

 [Read more](#)

UPDATE

IAS Film Series: "Big Alcohol: Explained"

The Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) have launched a new film series which will include nine explanatory films and feature topic experts.

The first in the series **"Big Alcohol: Explained"** features Professor Mark Petticrew, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Dr Gemma Mitchell, University of Stirling, and Dr Aweek Bhattacharya, Social Market Foundation. The film explains who the main players are in the multinational alcohol industry, what their growth and profit strategies are, how they influence health policy and shift blame of harm onto consumers, and why they damage the economy.

Over the coming months IAS will be publishing more in the series, including ‘The Price of Alcohol: Explained’ and ‘The Marketing of Alcohol: Explained’

 [Watch on YouTube](#)

UPDATE

Debate: Investing in Alcohol Services to Reduce Alcohol Related Harm in Scotland

On Thursday 7 September, Carol Mochan MSP led a debate in the Scottish Parliament highlighting the public health emergency we are facing in Scotland. She pointed to the high number of alcohol-related deaths in 2022, which saw 1276 people in Scotland losing their lives because of alcohol.

MSPs from parties across the political spectrum agreed that we need more action and less talk to address our problem with alcohol, particularly for those living in our poorest

MSP Gillian Mackay focused on the need to combat alcohol marketing and supported calls for the implementation of an alcohol harm prevention levy to raise funds from the sale of alcohol to fund prevention and treatment.

In response to the points raised, Elena Whitham MSP, Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy, outlined the government's initiatives to address mental health and substance use, workforce plans, and collaboration with local leaders and recovery groups to reduce alcohol harm. Ms Whitham also announced that the findings and next steps of the consultation on restricting alcohol marketing will be published in the coming months.

 [Read the Official Report](#)

 [Watch the debate](#)



CONSULTATIONS

Healthcare in Remote and Rural Areas

The Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee have launched a **consultation** to hear people's views on what policies and actions would be most effective in addressing the issues people face when accessing healthcare in remote and rural areas.

The committee wants to hear from anyone who uses healthcare services or works in the health and social care sector or has views on remote and rural healthcare.

The consultation closes on Friday 20 October.



RESEARCH

New modelling of alcohol harms in Scotland

Researchers from the Sheffield Alcohol Research Group (SARG), University of Sheffield, have published a new report commissioned by the Scottish Government on the impact of alcohol pricing policies, alcohol consumption and harm in Scotland.



New modelling of alcohol pricing policies, alcohol consumption and harm in Scotland

An adaptation of the Sheffield Tobacco and Alcohol Policy Model

Overall, the report highlights that a combination of high inflation and the long-term effects of the pandemic on drinking behaviour are likely to lead to increases in alcohol-related harm. To combat this, the researchers believe an increase in the MUP level is now needed to maintain the positive impacts, and that failing to link MUP to rising inflation will cost more lives in the future.

 **Read more**

 **Read a Twitter thread from lead author Colin Angus**

RESEARCH

Readiness to Change? Post-Pandemic Practice Pressures and Alcohol Related Brain Damage

Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD) is an umbrella term that reflects the long-term consequences of alcohol consumption on the brain. Whilst the link between alcohol and liver damage or cancer for example, is well recognised, the association between alcohol consumption and long-term cognition, function and behaviour is often overlooked.

In a new blog post written for the Institute of Alcohol Studies, Dr Darren Quelch discusses

evidence-based care can be delivered.

 [Read the blog post](#)

EVENT

WHO Less Alcohol Webinar Series

The World Health Organization has announced the return of the Less Alcohol Webinar Series for its third edition.

Each hour-long webinar will include a keynote presentation, three to four spotlight country cases, active moderation and an interactive experience for online participants. All events are free with prior registration available at the links below:

- **Alcohol monopolies: what does it take for alcohol monopolies to work?** Wednesday 18 October, 13:00 CET
 - **Youth and alcohol: do new trends demand new solutions?** Tuesday 7 November, 13:00 CET
 - **Measuring alcohol policy implementation: are existing tools and methods fit for purpose and use?** Thursday 7 December, 13:00 CET
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EVENT






CPG on Improving Scotland's Health: December Meeting

The next meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Improving Scotland's Health will be held as a hybrid meeting, online and in Parliament on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 18:00-20:00.

The meeting is for interested MSPs and registered group members who have completed a declaration of interest form. Members will have already received the Zoom registration link. Please contact the secretariat at CEO@ashscotland.org.uk if you would like to become a member of the CPG.

 [Find out more about the CPG](#)



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