



March 2022



## **UPDATE**

### **Industry influence: a barrier to progress in public health policy**

Powerful unhealthy commodity industries are a significant barrier to progress in public health policy.

In a new blog post, SPECTRUM researchers Professor Mark Petticrew and Professor Jeff Collin highlight the strategies used by unhealthy commodity industries (UCIs) to influence public health policy. They discuss UCIs' methods of misinformation to the public and schoolchildren through corporate social responsibility organisations and industry-funded charities. The Professors also note the work of the recently reconstituted Cross Party Group on Improving Scotland's Health (details below).

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 [Read the SPECTRUM blog post here.](#)

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## Evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

AFS Chief Executive Alison Douglas gave evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on tackling alcohol harms in Scotland, alongside Professor Niamh Fitzgerald (University of Stirling), Lucie Giles (Public Health Scotland), and Elinor Jayne (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems).

The invited participants answered MSPs' questions around consumption, alcohol-related deaths, and explained why the alcohol industry should not be involved in health policy decision-making. They discussed the effectiveness of steps taken to reduce alcohol harms and recommended further public health interventions such as maintaining and uprating minimum unit pricing, restricting alcohol marketing, and legislating for alcohol labelling.

 Take a look at the [Twitter thread](#) and the [Official Report](#) from the Committee.


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## Drug and alcohol services update

New Audit Scotland report says that Government's drug and alcohol plans should be clearer.

In 2020, 1,339 people died from drug-related causes and 1,190 died from alcohol-related causes - a rise of 5% and 17% respectively, from 2019. The briefing shows that with these recent, devastatingly high deaths which particularly affected our most deprived communities, a clear, integrated plan is needed to support people with both alcohol and drugs problems.

 Read the full report [here](#).

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## Youth Engagement - Alcohol Marketing

### North Ayrshire Modern Apprentices

Megan, Alcohol Focus Scotland's Youth Engagement Coordinator, worked with seven Modern Apprentices from North Ayrshire Council, exploring their views and experience of alcohol marketing. The Modern Apprentices shared that they would like to see further information provided on adverts and alcohol products to ensure those of drinking age can make informed choices. They also felt that further education was needed in school and informal settings to provide young people with information about alcohol.



The Modern Apprentices participated in activities exploring the different types of alcohol marketing young people are exposed to and will now work with the groups they support to explore the topic and bring feedback and outputs to a follow-up session with Alcohol Focus Scotland in May.

### Scottish Youth Parliament

In March, nine Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) took part in the

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online consultation workshop “Is Alcohol Everywhere?”. The workshop was opened by Maree Todd, Minister for Public Health, Women’s Health and Sport. The Minister spoke about the impact alcohol marketing has on children and young people, and shared that the Scottish Government is looking at restrictions to reduce the harm they may experience due to this.

The session, supported by the Scottish Youth Parliament, the Scottish Government Alcohol Harm Prevention Policy Team, and Alcohol Focus Scotland, allowed the young people to share their own and their constituents’ views on alcohol marketing and possible restrictions. MSYPs shared their experience of and opinions on alcohol marketing online, on TV, at the cinema, outdoors, and through sports sponsorship. They felt that marketing influences young people’s attitudes by normalising alcohol products. The young people also discussed how high levels of exposure to alcohol marketing impacts children’s rights in relation to health, information, and their best interests. The feedback from the session and the SYP What’s Your Take survey will be used to inform the Scottish Government’s forthcoming consultation on alcohol marketing.




Want to find out more about our work with children and young people? Get in touch with [Megan](#).



## **AFS Response to EU Labelling Consultation**

AFS provided evidence to the European Commission’s consultation on the revision of EU legislation on Food Information to Consumers. The consultation was open to EU and non-EU citizens as well as to professional and non-professional stakeholders. We responded to the multiple-choice questions around front-of-pack labelling and the setting of nutrient profiles to restrict the use of health and nutrition claims on foods, and alcoholic beverage labelling. We support the mandatory inclusion of complete, simplified, and easy to read nutritional information. We strongly agree the labelling guidance around alcoholic drinks should be brought in line with other foods and beverages on a mandatory basis and not to be included voluntarily by the alcohol industry. We also provided the EU Commission with our [Labelling Briefing](#) and our recent research on the [inadequacy of sugar and calorie labelling on wines](#).



 See our full response [here](#).

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## CONSULTATIONS

### **Human Rights Consortium Scotland Response to Human Rights Act Reform Consultation**

AFS supports the Human Rights Consortium Scotland's joint response to the Human Rights Act Reform Consultation. The plans to replace the Human Rights Act would weaken human rights protection and our ability to hold government to account.

 Read the response [here](#).

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## RESEARCH

### **National objectives, local policymaking: public health efforts to translate national legislation into local policy in Scottish alcohol licensing**

Policymaking environments are multi-centric by necessity and design. Alcohol premises licensing is governed both by Scottish legislation and at a local level. This new research aimed to describe the obstacles local public health actors face when attempting to influence the alcohol premises licensing system. The study

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concluded that a commitment to a policy outcome (in this case, the public health objective) in national legislation does not guarantee success at local level.

 Access the study [here](#).

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## RESEARCH

### MUP and cross-border purchases

New evidence from Public Health Scotland shows that minimum unit pricing had minimal impact on cross-border purchases.

Evidence so far suggests that MUP can and does have the effect we hoped it would, with no evidence of the unintended consequences that people were concerned about.

 Read the full publication [here](#).

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## RESEARCH

### The Marketing and Consumption of No and Low Alcohol Products in the UK

A new report published by the Institute of Alcohol Studies aimed to examine how No and Low Alcohol (NoLo) beverages are marketed and promoted in the UK and explores how and why consumers drink them. Dr Emily Nicholls, from the University of York, found that NoLo marketing uses problematic strategies including addition marketing, encouraging people to drink NoLos in addition to their regular drinking instead of using NoLos as alternative products, and stealth marketing, which promotes the overall alcohol brand. Dr Nicholls also examined how



drinkers and non-drinkers view NoLos, and suggested policy recommendations to the UK Government.

 Read the full report [here](#).

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## CPG on Improving Scotland's Health

The third meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Improving Scotland's Health will be held on Wednesday 20th April at 12:30-13:45, chaired by co-convenor Emma Harper MSP.

The theme will be Marketing Matters, and we will explore the opportunities and importance of restricting the marketing of unhealthy commodities as part of Non-Communicable Disease Prevention.

This meeting is for registered group members who have completed a Declaration of Interests form (DOI) only.

 If you would like to become a member, please [email ASH Scotland](#).

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