Newsletter from Alcohol Focus Scotland
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November 2023

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UPDATE

Unhealthy products driving nearly half a million people out of work

A coalition of health charities is calling on the UK Government to put in place a comprehensive strategy to prevent ill-health from commercially driven risk factors, and redress the balance between industry influence and the public's health.

The Alcohol Health Alliance (AHA), which Alcohol Focus Scotland is a member of, alongside Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), and the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA), have joined forces to outline the scale of harm caused collectively by tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks, which are major causes of death and chronic disease.

Big businesses are currently profiting from ill-health caused by smoking, drinking alcohol and eating unhealthy foods, while the public pay the price in poor health, higher taxes and an under-performing economy.

The wage penalty, unemployment and economic inactivity caused by tobacco, alcohol and obesity costs the UK economy an eye-watering £31bn and has led to an estimated 459,000 people out of work.

Read the coalition's recommendations

UPDATE

Updated Local Alcohol Profiles

We have updated our **Local Alcohol Profiles** with recent data on alcohol deaths and child protection. The profiles demonstrate the high level of alcohol harm within Scotland's 32 local authorities. We have also developed a new **Scotland Alcohol Profile** which gives a national picture.

Find your Local Alcohol Profile and the Scotland Alcohol Profile

UPDATE

Alcohol Advertising Broadcast Ban to be introduced in Ireland

Irish Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, has signed the commencement order of Section 19 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 (PHAA) which places a 9 p.m. broadcast watershed for alcohol advertisements on television. On radio, the watershed will apply from midnight to 10am, and then from 3pm to midnight. The restrictions will come into force on 10 January 2025.

This measure will help reduce the level of children's exposure to alcohol marketing, which is known to be a key driver of both initiating alcohol use by children and increasing use. It is a particularly important restriction given that Diageo is currently the Number 4 advertiser to children in Ireland and at least 50,000 children start to drink every year.

Read more from Alcohol Action Ireland

CAMPAIGN

Alcohol is Toxic Campaign

Balance North East have launched a new campaign supported by Cancer Research UK to highlight that alcohol is a Group 1 carcinogen which causes 7 types of cancer.

The campaign video follows the journey of alcohol through the body, mutating cells and leading to the formation of a tumour. It has been developed with input from doctors to depict the evidence on how alcohol causes cancer.

The campaign was launched due to low awareness in the North East of England that alcohol causes cancer, with only 1 in 3 people aware of the causal link. However, the information provided is important for everyone, no matter where they live in the UK.

Read more and watch the video

POLICY

New ADPH position statement on alcohol

In the new statement, the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) call for alcohol policies to move their focus from treatment to prevention to reduce the affordability, availability and appeal of alcohol. The number one policy priority for ADPH members in their most recent policy survey was minimum unit pricing. They also call for mandatory health labelling and for a reduction in children's exposure to alcohol through restrictions on advertising and sponsorship.

Read the statement and their policy recommendations

Read a blog post about the statement by Alice Wiseman, Policy Lead for Addiction, ADPH

POLICY

Joint statement by WHO/Europe and IARC to the European Parliament

A joint statement on raising awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer has been issues by WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge and Director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) Dr Elisabete Weiderpass.

In the statement, they note that alcoholic beverages have been identified as a Group 1 carcinogen since 1988. Alcohol has been causally linked to seven different types of cancer: mouth, upper throat, larynx, oesophagus, breast, liver, and bowel cancer.

They make two recommendations for Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and related initiatives:

- The contribution of alcohol consumption to cancer incidence and mortality should be clearly recognized without the use of any qualifiers or misleading adjectives such as "harmful" or "heavy" consumption of alcohol or "responsible drinking"

- Measures should be taken to clearly inform the public of this risk, which is not well known among the general population.

Find out more

CONSULTATIONS

AFS Response: Minimum Unit Pricing Consultation

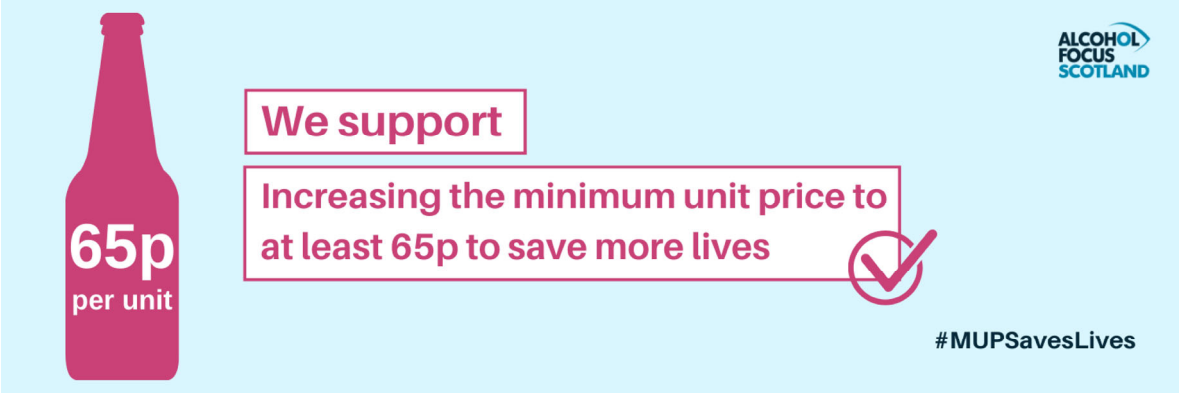
Alcohol Focus Scotland has responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on the continuation and future pricing of alcohol minimum unit pricing (MUP). Alcohol Focus Scotland strongly welcomes the proposal to continue MUP and to increase it to at least 65p per unit.

The evidence is clear that the policy has achieved its aim of reducing alcohol-related harm by both reducing population consumption and by targeting the consumption of people drinking at higher levels. It has also contributed to reducing alcohol-related health inequalities. Any negative unintended consequences have not been prevalent or typical.

It is essential that the minimum unit price is increased to at least 65p. The benefits of MUP have been eroded by inflation over the last 5 years, as alcohol has become more affordable than when the price was introduced in 2018. Failure to uprate would critically undermine the policy and reverse the positive effects we have seen so far.

In addition to continuing MUP and increasing the price to at least 65 pence, AFS recommends the Scottish Government introduces further legislation to provide an automatic uprating mechanism to ensure MUP rises in line with inflation. An Alcohol Harm Prevention Levy would enable any additional profits from MUP to be recovered from retailers and used to fund local action on prevention and treatment and recovery support.

Read our response



CONSULTATIONS

AFS Response: Updating labelling guidance for NoLos

Alcohol Focus Scotland responded to the UK Government's consultation on updating labelling guidance for no and low-alcohol alternatives (NoLos). We believe it is essential for regulations to be set out in legislation, not in voluntary guidance.

The current system and definitions are confusing. To provide clarity, regardless of descriptors, we are calling for all NoLos to clearly display their ABV content on the front of the label or packaging, and be clearly indicated at the point of sale online.

We also advocate for mandatory inclusion of health-related information such as age restriction warnings and the CMO's low-risk drinking guidelines.

We raise concerns as to the potential for increased harm from greater visibility and promotion of NoLo products due to brand-sharing, whereby alcohol substitutes are used to promote the alcohol brand.

Increasing use of NoLos alone is unlikely to achieve the UK Government's intended aim of reducing alcohol harms. We recommend implementing evidence-based measures including increasing the price of alcohol, restricting its marketing, and reducing its availability. The UK Government should publish their consultation on alcohol labelling without further delay.

Read our response and additional recommendations

CONSULTATIONS

New Consultation: Draft treatment guidelines

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities at the UK Government are **consulting** on draft UK clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment. They have worked with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to produce the first ever UK clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment.

The main objectives of the UK clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment are to:

- Develop a clear consensus on good practice

- Help services to implement interventions for harmful drinking and alcohol dependence that are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Respond to the consultation by 11:59pm on 8 December 2023

TRAINING

Alcohol Awareness Course

Alcohol Focus Scotland runs training sessions for people who want to understand alcohol, its impact and ways in which they can provide basic support and signpost others affected by it. Our alcohol awareness course is especially useful for people working in supportive roles such as caring and support services, such as housing, addictions, and community-based support services.

Find out more and register: Thursday 7 December, 09:30-12:30

TRAINING

Alcohol and Older Adults Course

Ideal for anyone supporting older adults, from healthcare professionals to sheltered housing staff, this training session will help you learn about age-specific problems caused by alcohol and how to support older adults. The session will also improve your understanding of how to engage with support functions and local activity and increase your awareness of interventions.

Book your place for Tuesday 12 December, 09:30-12:30

RESEARCH

Change and stability in British drinking practices and culture between 2009 and 2019

Although the types of drinking practices have remained stable, their frequency and characteristics like location and accompanying activities has changed, according to new research from the Sheffield Addictions Research Group (SARG). Changes included shifts away from habitual home drinking of wine, substantial transformation of the 'Big night out', and persistence in some but not all aspects of pub drinking and meal-based drinking practices.

Read the study

Read a Twitter/X thread from the lead author

RESEARCH

Support for policies restricting alcohol exposure in films

People are supportive of not showing alcoholic beverages or alcohol use in films aimed at children under 15 and not glorifying alcohol consumption in films, finds new research from the La Trobe University Centre for Alcohol Policy Research.

Study participants were asked to rate their support of eight policies aimed at addressing alcohol consumption in films. People who were older, female or reported lower alcohol use were more supportive of the policies.

One group of participants was shown an infographic outlining the actual amount of alcohol in films, to determine if this would impact their views of the policies, while the other was not. Only one policy received higher support from the group that received the infographic, which was: "Information about alcohol sponsorship should be provided."

Read the study

EVENT

CPG on Improving Scotland's Health: December Meeting

There is still time to join the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Improving

Scotland's Health. This will be held as a hybrid meeting, online and in Parliament on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 18:15-20:00.

We will be joined by Paul Johnston, Chief Executive of Public Health Scotland. Paul will share his thoughts on Scotland's wider health trends, pressure on the NHS, and the importance of addressing the role of health-harming commodities as a key element of making progress on these trends.

Members will have received details of how to book an in-person space and register for online attendance.

To become a member of the CPG please contact the secretariat at CEO@ashscotland.org.uk.

Find out more about the CPG

EVENT

WHO Less Alcohol Webinar Series

The hour-long webinar, organized by the World Health Organization, will include a keynote presentation, three to four spotlight country cases, active moderation and an interactive experience for online participants. The event is free with prior registration available below:

- **Measuring alcohol policy implementation: are existing tools and methods fit for purpose and use?** Wednesday 7 February, 13:00 CET