Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Bill

NHS Lanarkshire Addiction Services

Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership has submitted a response to the Alcohol Bill. I fully support the ADPs various comments on the Bill, and believe that, if implemented effectively, the Bill can go a long way towards reducing the harm associated with Scotland’s longstanding difficult relationship with alcohol. Whilst I am in agreement with all of the points raised by Lanarkshire ADP, I would like to emphasis my support for minimum pricing, and for greater control of off-sale alcohol.

I am very much in favour of imposing a minimum price per unit of alcohol, and setting this at a level of 50p, or more. The evidence is indisputable that this will result in a significant reduction in harmful drinking amongst those most at risk of physical and mental health problems. It is also acknowledged that setting a relatively high minimum price per unit can reduce the amount of alcohol consumed by younger people, thereby reducing the likelihood that significant early onset drinking may result in more serious alcohol problems in later life.

There is little doubt that alcohol is much more affordable and available now than in the past. It is discouraging to see supermarkets and other off-licensed premises continue to offer alcohol promotions of the “3 for 2” and “buy-one-get-one-free” variety. Such promotions may lead to more excessive use of alcohol, and I have personally witnessed young people in a supermarket with a calculator on their mobile phone, working out how many units of alcohol they can purchase per pound spent. I would like to see tighter controls on alcohol promotions which, along with minimum pricing, will hopefully produce a reduction in harmful and hazardous alcohol use.

I look forward to following the progress of this Bill, and it is heartening to see that minimum pricing, amongst other measures, now has cross-party support at the UK Parliament in London.

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