Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Bill

North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership

Thank you for giving North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership the opportunity to comment on the proposed Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Bill, which would result in the introduction of a minimum sales price for a unit of alcohol.

After discussion at the last meeting of the Partnership on Wednesday 6th January 2010, North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) have agreed in principle to support this proposed Alcohol Bill and the measures that it looks to introduce.

1. The advantages and disadvantages of establishing a Minimum Alcohol Sales Price based on a Unit of Alcohol

We can recognise the benefits associated with the proposals included in this Bill, namely the introduction of a minimum price per unit of alcohol, and the potential positive impacts that this measure could have with regards excessive consumption. We do feel however that this measure would be more effective if it formed an integral part of a larger suite of activities delivering greater control over the availability and promotion of alcohol.

2. The Level at which such a Proposed Minimum Pricing should be set and the justification for that level

North Ayrshire ADP are of the opinion that the level at which the minimum price for a unit of alcohol is ultimately a ministerial responsibility.

3. The rationale behind the use of Minimum Pricing as an effective tool to address all types of problem drinking

This ADP recognises that the rationale for the introduction of this measure would be to actively reduce the consumption levels of the collective adult population in Scotland, including young people and those with problematic drinking behaviours. This would further bolster the previous measures to raise awareness of units and recommended limits as recommended by NHS Scotland.

4. Possible alternatives to the introduction of a minimum alcohol sales price as a effective means of addressing the public health issues surrounding levels of alcohol consumption in Scotland
This ADP support the stance that there is a need to continue the challenge being made at both local and national levels to alter the current cultural acceptability of excessive alcohol consumption and the associated behaviours.

We also recognise that there are a number of opportunities, which do not currently sit within the Scottish Parliament’s remit to legislate. These include increased taxation on alcohol and tighter restriction and controls on advertising and product placement through the media.

5. The advantages and disadvantages of introducing social responsibility levy on on-sales and off-sales licence holders in Scotland

The introduction of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, charged on-sales premises with adhering to tighter constraints including restricted licensing hours and mandatory server training. It is therefore the view of this ADP that similar social responsibility levies should be implemented against off-sales premises to ensure a more cohesive policy with regards alcohol sales and consumption.

6. The justification for empowering Licensing Boards to raise the legal Alcohol purchase age in their areas to 21

It is the opinion of this ADP that any changes to the legal age for purchasing alcohol must be carried out at a national basis as there are clear difficulties if this was attempted on a locality basis. These would include for example, enforcement issues and confusion amongst the general population.

7. The role of promotional offers and promotional material in encouraging people to purchase more alcohol than they intended

It is recognised that in a highly competitive market, it is unrealistic to ask retailers to reduce such promotions voluntarily, therefore it is the view of this ADP that all forms of alcohol promotion are inappropriate and would welcome the introduction of advertising restrictions through the use of appropriate legislation.

8. Any other aspects of the Bill

The health and welfare of North Ayrshire’s residents is paramount to our Partnership. We would therefore like to note a number of other considerations which should be taken into account with regard these proposals including:
• the need for tighter controls on the availability of ‘fortified' alcoholic beverages with caffeine used as a stimulant alongside the depressant effects of alcohol;
• the need to reinforce a collective sense of responsibility for changing Scotland’s alcohol culture beyond the drinks industry and licence trade in order to change underlying cultural norms;
• the power of community involvement and activism in bringing about ownership and lasting change in our communities and the need to grow, develop and support it;
• the requirement to ensure the non-stigmatisation of people with harmful or dependent use and to ensure that they receive the best support and care available to ensure their recovery; and
• the opportunity to consider the most effective approach to labelling.

Angela Gray
Partnership Development Officer - North Ayrshire
North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership
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