Evidence provided to the Scottish and UK Governments shows that a rise in the price of alcohol is one of the most effective ways to reduce consumption and minimum pricing is backed by a range of health experts across the globe. Minimum pricing seems likely to have a minimal impact on those drinking in moderation but will affect those who drink cheap alcohol in large quantities, in particular young binge drinkers. Increasing the price of high alcohol content beverages and lowering the price of low alcohol content beverages aims to appeal to consumers who may then opt for a healthier choice. The hope is that increasing the price of currently cheap, high strength types of alcohol would deter people from drinking as much and therefore lower mortality and morbidity rates associated with harmful and hazardous drinking. International research shows that consumers of alcohol are very sensitive to price. The relationship between per capita consumption and health has been recognised for many years.

We support the general principles of the Scottish Government's Alcohol etc (Scotland) Bill. They are in line with other initiatives such as recommendations currently being tabled to the British Columbia government by the Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC), where Dr Tessa Parkes from the University of Stirling have a Research Associate role (see http://carbc.ca/portals/0/resources/AlcPricing&HST.pdf).

The Scottish Government Bill suggests more than just pricing changes and we applaud the government's interest in age verification and social responsibility levy's, to name a couple of the other proposed interventions. As CARBC also states in their group of alcohol policy reports, changes to alcohol pricing needs to be part of a wider evidence-based prevention, policy and hard reduction strategies. The Scottish Government are being seen by alcohol commentators outside of Scotland as leading the way in responsible policy making to address the many social and health harms associated with the heavy, harmful and hazardous drinking that currently takes such a high toll on our society.

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