The advantages and disadvantages of establishing a minimum alcohol sales price based on a unit of alcohol

Members of the Board held and expressed differing opinions on whether the adoption of a minimum alcohol sales price based on a unit of alcohol would be an advantage. Those individual members who agreed with the principle considered that introduction of a minimum sales price alone might not be an effective measure on its own to curb the various problems highlighted in the documents that accompanied the consultation documentation.

The level at which such a proposed minimum price should be set and the justification for that level

In keeping with the Board's uncertainty about establishing a minimum alcohol sales price based on a unit of alcohol, the Board did not form a particular view about the level at which a proposed minimum price should be set, if one is going to be introduced. They did however consider that in comparison with the current prices in Scotland for On sales of alcoholic drinks that the Off sales price was too low and formed the view that if the price per unit for Off sales is to be raised that a reasonable differential between the sale price for Off sales and for On sales should be maintained, with Off sales continuing to be cheaper, recognising that On sales businesses have higher overheads.

The rationale behind the use of minimum pricing as an effective tool to address all types of problem drinking

The Board considered that other measures, and not just minimum pricing, required to be used to best address types of problem drinking. They considered that people who drink to excess would be likely to cut back on other expenditure as a reaction to minimum pricing of alcohol, rather than on the amount they spend on alcohol in order to maintain their former levels of consumption.

Possible alternatives to the introduction of a minimum alcohol sales price as an effective means of addressing the public health issues surrounding levels of alcohol consumption in Scotland

The main alternative suggested by the Board concerned reducing product placement, advertising and sports sponsorship by producers of alcohol which the Board considered was likely to have a significant influence in encouraging increased consumption of alcohol. Board members observed that many television programmes, e.g. Coronation Street, East Enders, etc frequently involve scenes where much social interaction takes place in licensed premises, and this they believed played a part in encouraging the consumption of alcohol.
The advantages and disadvantages of introducing a social responsibility levy on pubs and clubs in Scotland

The Board supported in principle the introduction of a social responsibility levy considering that on occasions where there was a clear link between certain premises and a particular adverse effect that such a levy may be desirable, but believed that it would often be difficult to identify those pubs and clubs responsible for generating the additional problems and the associated costs which were alleged to justify the imposition of the levy on operators of such businesses.

The justification for empowering licensing boards to raise the legal alcohol purchase age in their area to 21 [for Off-sales]

The majority of Board members supported the proposal to empower licensing boards to raise the legal alcohol purchase age to deal with isolated local problems where a clear link between such problems and sales to persons under 21 could be established. However a minority of members did not support the proposal.

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

The Board consider that promotional offers and promotional material do encourage people to purchase larger quantities of alcohol than they otherwise would purchase and would support measures to curtail such promotions.

Any other aspects of the Bill

The Board considered that the Bill should also give powers to licensing boards to raise the legal alcohol purchase age in parts of their areas in respect of On sales on the same grounds as that proposed for Off sales, where it could be established that there was a particular problem involving On sales to those under 21. This could for example be used for premises which attract customers who are below or just over 18 where a particular problem exists at those premises.

Keith MacConnachie
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East Lothian Licensing Board
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