



Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

Home Office
Alcohol strategy consultation 4th Floor Fry
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

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Personal Information

Dear Sir / Madam,

The UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Home Office Alcohol Strategy Consultation. As a member of the Alcohol Health Alliance (AHA), FPH strongly supports the AHA response to this consultation, and accordingly, has the following views on the five key areas addressed.

FPH supports the proposal to introduce a minimum unit price (MUP) on alcohol in England and Wales. An MUP will mean heavy drinkers drink less, commit fewer violent crimes and are less likely to end up in hospital. 80% of all alcohol in England is being drunk by the 30% of heaviest drinkers.

An MUP is a proportionate, targeted measure, increasing the price of the cheapest and strongest drinks, thereby reducing drinking levels among younger, heavier drinkers, with comparatively little impact on the spending of moderate drinkers. Affordability should determine MUP, with a review mechanism for necessary adjustments.

A 50p MUP would be even more proportionate and targeted, resulting in a significant reduction of harm. Evidence suggests that a 50p MUP will reduce consumption by 6.7%, saving around 97,000 hospital admissions a year after ten years. A 50p MUP is also consistent with the MUP level set to be introduced in Scotland.

FPH supports the proposed end to multi-buy promotions in the off-trade, and also advocates an end to multi-buys in the on-trade – as well as ending incentives to purchase and consume more than originally intended. FPH also believes public health should be a specific licensing objective and not tied to cumulative impact policies.

Alcohol availability must be tackled alongside affordability to ensure lasting reductions in consumption and associated health harms. Freeing up the requirements businesses selling alcohol will contribute to an increase in alcohol availability, further entrenching our pro-alcohol culture.

Health warnings should be printed on alcohol labelling, informing people about the risks they take by drinking alcohol. Evidence suggests such this would increase people's knowledge about the potential harm alcohol can cause, and make it easier for people to understand the need for an MUP.

The evidence linking alcohol to over 60 medical conditions is unarguable. Factual and non-sensational warnings would help the public understand that alcohol is associated with a whole range of health harms and dangers with potential long-term implications – beyond those shorter term implications associated with binge drinking.

Health warnings on alcohol labelling could include: alcohol is a drug that causes dependence; alcohol is a drug that causes addiction; alcohol increases risks of violence and abuse; alcohol reduces fertility in men and women; alcohol causes over 15,000 deaths a year in the UK; alcohol increases risks of mouth, throat and other cancers.

Unhealthy levels of alcohol consumption are linked with poor mental health as both a cause and an effect. The Alcohol Strategy should link explicitly with the mental health strategy No Health without Mental Health, recognising the importance, for control of alcohol consumption, of initiatives to improve mental health at a population level.

FPH would strongly urge Government to implement minimum unit price at no less than 50p per unit – particularly in view of the strong evidence in favour of such a move.

