

TITLE OF REPORT: Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the views of the Health & Wellbeing Board on how the introduction of alcohol minimum unit price can be supported.

Background

2. The Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) sets a floor price for a unit of alcohol. It targets the cheapest alcohol most commonly consumed by the heaviest drinkers.
3. Sheffield University were commissioned by the National Institute of Health Research to look at the impact of a 50p minimum unit price for alcohol on health harms at the local authority level across the North of England.
4. The results reveal that a 50p MUP would see alcohol consumption in some areas falling by twice the England average, leading to significant reductions in deaths, alcohol related hospital admissions and alcohol related crime across the North. A 50p MUP would see the heaviest drinkers in the poorest communities benefitting the most and as a result it would help reduce health inequalities.
5. Key findings from the MUP research indicate that in Gateshead:
 - 174 deaths would be prevented over the next 20 years
 - Alcohol related hospital admissions would reduce by an estimated 283 each year, reducing pressure on the NHS, with people from the poorest communities seeing the biggest falls and saving £850,000 per year.
 - The criminal justice system would also benefit, with crimes falling by 338. Those figures include 67 fewer thefts or robberies, 206 less incidents of criminal damage and 62 fewer violent incidents
 - the benefits of MUP would be particularly felt in areas of deprivation where the harm is greater and so would help reduce health inequalities.
6. There is no single solution to tackling alcohol-related harm, however, all the independent evidence tells us that getting rid of the cheapest, strongest alcohol would have the most impact as it is typically consumed by young people and those drinking at harmful levels.
7. MUP was introduced in Scotland at 50p per unit in 2018, meaning that three litres of strong cider (ABV 7.5%) now costs no less than £11.25. Currently in England, this same bottle of cider can cost as little as £3.50.

8. The latest study from NHS Scotland on the impact on off-sales in the 12 months since MUP has just been published and the headlines are as follows:
- The amount of pure alcohol sold per adult in Scotland has fallen from 7.4 litres to 7.1 litres, a reduction of 3.6%
 - At the same time off sales in England and Wales, measured in pure alcohol per adult, have increased from 6.3 litres to 6.5 litres
 - The reductions in different drinks categories are as follows:
 - Cider sales fell 18.6%
 - Spirits fell 3.8%
 - Wine fell 3%
 - Beer sales reduced 1.1%
9. This latest research follows data showing overall sales are falling in Scotland by 3% at a time when they were increasing in England and Wales by 2%. Sales are falling faster to the heaviest drinking households, according to analysis carried out by Newcastle University. There are early signs of reductions in liver disease admissions with the greatest falls in the most deprived groups.

Recommendations

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to support the introduction of minimum unit price in England and write to Westminster urging that minimum unit price is introduced without delay.

Contact: Gerald Tompkins, Consultant in Public Health / Service Director Health & Wellbeing Tel. 0191 4332940