

## **EVIDENCE FOR THE ALCOHOL COMMISSION**

ADSW response to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and Alcohol Scotland Bill

- 1 The Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 passed by the Scottish Parliament included measures aimed at helping to tackle the over-consumption of alcohol**
- (a) Which measure do you see as having an impact?**
  - (b) Which measures are not being sufficiently enforced?**

ADSW is aware that various provisions of the 2005 Act have been enacted over the past two or three years. It is evident (e.g.) in supermarkets where the sale of alcohol is limited to specific times and from specific locations. However, we believe that it is too soon to ascertain the effects which the new Licensing measures have made and would suggest that Government may wish to commission Scotland wide research to evaluate the effects, if any, of the measures already introduced.

- 2 Given that price and availability are considered by the World Health Organisation to be the most effective measures in tackling the over-consumption of alcohol**
- (a) What specific pricing mechanism can fairly and effectively tackle over-consumption of alcohol?**
  - (b) In addition to the current licensing laws how should we tackle availability?**

- (a) Price  
ADSW has previously expressed its support for the proposal to introduce a minimum alcohol sales price based on a unit of alcohol. We believe that the modelling exhibited in the Sheffield University research shows how effective a minimum unit price can be. Furthermore, we believe that the effects of minimum unit pricing on moderate drinkers will be minimal. To effectively tackle Scotland's unique relationship with alcohol, policies which will reduce the population mean alcohol intake need to be pursued. As quoted above, ADSW believes that realistic pricing is the most effective way of doing so.
- (b) Licensing Laws  
The question of over-provision was one which troubled the Nicholson Committee in its deliberations leading up to the 2005 Act. It is evident that alcohol is widely available across our communities in both the on-trade and off-trade. Our supermarkets sell alcohol at competitive rates and often as a loss leader. This has particular significance in areas of deprivation where we know this has a disproportionate impact on the local communities and where alcohol related problems are known to be more extreme. In terms of Licensing Law, it may be prudent to revisit the question of provision and over provision as a means of tackling availability.

- 3 Should restrictions be made to advertising and other promotion of alcohol products? If so, what forms should these take?**

ADSW believes that restrictions on advertising of tobacco products played a significant part in the successes we are now seeing in Scotland as regards the reduction in smoking and smoking related disease and ill health. Further, we believe that similar restrictions in alcohol advertising can play a significant part in helping to tackle Scotland's alcohol problem. In particular, the links between alcohol (advertising) and sport/sporting success is, we believe, a particularly strong message for young people. Electronic advertising and issues related to the monitoring the web require to be addressed.

**4 Can we do more to improve communication/referral among services such as the Courts, Police and Primary Health Care Teams?**

ADSW believes that the structures are already in place through Community Planning Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships and Community Health Partnerships to deliver effective joined-up local services. Local structures and local key organisations must assure themselves that they are not overly complex and complicated as to be a barrier to effective strategic planning and delivery of service. Often the barriers around sharing of information between agencies prevent effective, timely intervention.

**5 Are there additional measures that could be taken to improve education, especially to younger people or people who may not realise they are drinking excessively, to demonstrate the risks of over consumption?**

ADSW believes that the Health Outcomes associated with the Curriculum for Excellence in relation to substance misuse offer a new, improved way of educating young people about alcohol and its effects in both the short and long terms. We also believe that whilst universal education is important, there also needs to be a more targeted focus on those young people more at risk of alcohol misuse than their peers. Whilst this approach may be fraught with difficulties it is extremely important that we offer the appropriate supports to our most vulnerable young people. The introduction of alcohol brief interventions (a HEAT target for NHS) will help ensure that there is additional focus on the drinking patterns of individuals. This initiative could be broadened out to include Social Work Criminal justice Services, Community Care services and key substance misuse services if this was adequately resourced.

**6 What steps should be taken to address alcohol addiction/dependency and prevention services and how should these be funded?**

ADSW believes that the partnership approach as currently championed by the Scottish Government is the best way to tackle alcohol misuse and that local ADPs and Community Planning Partnerships' role should be strengthened in this respect and representatives of the local Licensed Trade and Licensing bodies given more encouragement to be integral to the local response.

Service provision should reflect local need and be informed by a local needs analysis with the role of residential treatment and services for people with ARBD included in the analysis. Funding has traditionally come from the Scottish Government through NHS Boards for treatment services. ADSW has no particular comment to make on funding routes but believes that 'fund holders' should be accountable for the appropriate allocation of funding which has been earmarked for alcohol treatment services. Community Planning Partnerships should assure themselves that this is happening. As ever, guaranteed funding for a period of years would be most beneficial and improve service delivery.

Government may also wish to consider how best to utilise the additional revenue accrued by the introduction of a minimum pricing policy and ensure that this is channelled back into services.

**7 Is there a need to increase training for professionals who are at the front-line of combating alcohol over-consumption? What form might this take?**

Issues concerning Workforce Development and training should be considered together and a comprehensive training programme developed alongside workforce planning. Current training in brief interventions should be readily available to all staff groups who work with people with alcohol related problems. In addition, skills based training in motivational interviewing should be available to front line staff especially home care workers, residential staff, youth workers and others whose contact with clients is likely to provide opportunities to use these skills.

**8 Given the harmful effects of mixing alcohol with other substances, such as caffeine, do you believe that introducing legal limits for caffeine similar to those in other countries would be helpful?**

ADSW believes that if there is an evidence base which indicates that any substance mixed with alcohol produces harmful effects then this information should be included in any information strategy or training programme which is delivered locally or nationally and at an age appropriate level.

**9 Is there merit in limiting or discouraging the volume of alcohol in drinks sold as a way of tackling the harmful effects of over consumption?**

Any intervention which tackles the harmful effects of over-consumption should be considered. The current proposals to introduce a minimum sales price based on a unit of alcohol should act to promote the production of lower alcohol drinks. Any actions taken to limit or discourage the volume of alcohol in drinks must be accompanied by a nationwide age appropriate education programme and an ongoing awareness raising campaign.

**10 Are there further measures that can be taken to curb sales, especially to under-age people in off-sales?**

As regards the Scottish Government's current proposal to raise the legal alcohol purchase age to 21, ADSW has previously responded as follows. "ADSW believes that there are advantages and disadvantages with this proposal. Eighteen to twenty one year olds would be encouraged to drink in licensed premises where there are a mix of age groups and trained staff, making it a more controlled and safer environment. The effects of pre-loading may be reduced and the incidence of agent purchasing may also be reduced. However, whilst we agree that the underlying principles of raising the legal purchase age in off-licenses to be sound, we do believe that there should be a consistency of approach at least within and across local authority areas and most probably Scotland wide. We envisage situations where young people would travel from area to area, across authority boundaries or national boundaries to purchase alcohol. ADSW urges the Scottish Government to consider a national scheme and not leave this to local area licensing boards".

**11 Are there specific measures that we should take to help protect children and families from the harmful effects of alcohol abuse?**

ADSW is aware that the 'Early Years Framework', 'Equally Well' and the 'Children Affected by Parental Substance Misuse (CAPSM)' agendas are all in some way concerned with this issue. It is crucial that frontline agencies working with children and families and in child protection are supported to deliver the highest quality of service expected in this area.

This is a highly complex area and the harmful effects of alcohol misuse on children, families and communities are often local, contextual and highly destructive. Fast, easy access to support and treatment services is crucial. However, ADSW believes that it is extremely important to support communities to develop the structures which are relevant to their specific needs. In this respect, Community Planning Partnerships should have a key role in both identifying local issues and enabling the processes which allow local people to impact on local service planning. Government has a role in promoting existing community structures which support families and communities and the (voluntary) services which support these.

**12 What other measures could be taken to tackle over-consumption of alcohol?**

ADSW believes that the existing evidence base is clear in as much as the most effective way to reduce over-consumption is by the use of fiscal policies relating to alcohol duty (i.e. the higher the cost, the lower the consumption). If we really want to make a difference at population level we must consider the price of alcohol and its availability.

**13 What measure would best target irresponsible drinkers?**

ADSW believes, as stated above, that fiscal measures are necessary if we are to tackle Scotland's problem with alcohol at a population level. Over time, we believe that this will reduce the mean population alcohol intake and thus have positive benefits for all of Scotland's drinking population. In addition to fiscal measures, ADSW believes that there is scope for development within the Criminal Justice system to address some of the problems created by alcohol misuse, including development of the Arrest Referral Schemes; community disposals and community service orders.

**14 Given the increase in consumption of spirits as compared to wine and beer in the last 30 years, what measures would be effective in reducing the over-consumption of spirits which have a higher alcohol by volume than wine and beer?**

Again, ADSW believes that the rise in consumption of spirits correlates with their falling price in real terms over the past thirty years and should be addressed by increased taxation. In addition, it is noteworthy that in other developed countries (e.g. USA), spirits are generally only available in (liquor) stores licensed specifically for such a purpose. Commonly, wines and beers will be available from a range of outlets but spirits only available from specifically licensed premises. This significantly reduces the availability of spirits and, young people are not routinely put into situations with adults who are choosing their spirit purchase, hence associations are not being developed.

**15 Are there resources which should be given priority for further evidence/investigation?**

Scotland's success in reducing cigarette smoking and the harmful effects of smoking was not due to one particular intervention. It was the combination of legislation; taxation; culture change; medical knowledge; advertising bans and other approaches all working together which eventually led to the successes we are seeing today. ADSW believes that only by a similar approach will we change Scotland's relationship with alcohol. Raising the duty on alcohol is important but only alongside effective culture change through education; reducing availability; promotion of alcohol-free alternatives and quicker, easier access to treatment (amongst others), all need to be progressed and developed if we are to see lasting change.