

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Response to UK Government 'Alcohol structures consultation'

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh ("the College") is pleased to respond to the call for views on Alcohol structures by the UK Government. The College is an independent clinical standard-setting body and professional membership organisation, which aims to improve and maintain the quality of patient care. Founded in 1681, we support and educate doctors in the hospital sector throughout the UK and the world with over 12,000 Fellows and Members in 91 countries, covering 30 medical specialties.

General comments

Problems associated with alcohol continue to be a challenge for the NHS across the UK. We agree with other health organisations that the alcohol industry should have a reduced role in the formulation of alcohol policies to help ensure public health remains the priority. The alcohol industry should be strongly encouraged to contribute to the reduction of alcohol harm by sharing knowledge of sales patterns and marketing influence.

The implementation of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) remains a priority for the College and we ask the UK Government to support this in line with recent recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Licensing Act 2003ⁱ.

Specific comments

In recent years, doctors, psychiatrists, outreach teams and charities have expressed increasing concern about cheap, high-strength ciders. The statistics show 25% of alcohol treatment services patients in Glasgow and Edinburgh drink white cider, and of these 45% drink it exclusivelyⁱⁱ. According to Alcohol Concern, "*Cider, which is sweet and cheap, is the most frequent type of drink consumed by children under 15 years old*"ⁱⁱⁱ.

The College wishes to endorse the full response by Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) to this consultation and we join with SHAAP in welcoming the proposal to introduce a new still cider and perry band below 7.5% abv. The College, along with numerous partner organisations, has long campaigned for the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) because it believes that raising the price of alcohol, along with marketing restrictions and licensing regulation, is the best means of reducing consumption.

ⁱ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/licensing-act-2003/news-parliament-2015/licensing-act-reportpublished/>

ⁱⁱ Black, H. et al (2014) *White Cider Consumption and Heavy Drinkers: A Low-Cost Option but an Unknown price*. *Alcohol and Alcoholism* 49:6, pp675-80

ⁱⁱⁱ P3, *Alcohol Brands Consumed by Young People in Treatment*, Alcohol Concern (2015)
www.balancenortheast.co.uk/d_doc.php?id=369