



To:

Humza Yousaf, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Maree Todd, Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport

18 November 2021

Dear Cabinet Secretary, Minister,

IT IS TIME TO UPRATE MUP FOR THE BENEFIT OF SCOTLAND'S HEALTH

Despite early evaluation results showing that MUP appeared to be having the intended effect, with reduced alcohol consumption rates since it was introduced and decreases in hospital admissions from alcohol-related liver conditions, 2020 saw the highest number of alcohol-specific deaths registered since 2008. 1,190 people died of alcohol-specific causes in 2020 – an increase of 17% on 2019 and only a year after Scotland had seen a reduction of 10% in alcohol related deaths in a sign that MUP was saving lives.

These figures indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic may have undermined the initial health gains made after the introduction of MUP and the encouraging early signs of the policy's success. Scotland is still experiencing higher levels of harm than our neighbours in England and Wales. If you live in one of Scotland's poorest communities, you are four more times likely to die from an alcohol-specific cause than your counterparts living anywhere else in the country. All alcohol deaths are preventable and all represent a life cut tragically short, with many more lives scarred by loss. Though we don't yet know the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, we must do more. Alcohol is a health-harming product and should not be treated as if it were any other commodity as part of the weekly shop.

Now is the time for the minimum price to be uprated. It is widely acknowledged that the current 50p per unit has likely been eroded by inflation over the last nine years since the policy was approved by Parliament. Based on the retail price index a minimum unit price of 50 pence in 2012 is equivalent to 61p in 2021.

The original modelling by Sheffield University upon which MUP in Scotland is based indicated that a higher price of 60p or 70p would save significantly more lives and prevent more hospital admissions. They estimated a minimum price of 60p would deliver double the reduction in deaths and hospital admissions compared to a 50p MUP, and that 70p would deliver three times the effect.

The Scottish Government committed to review the price two years after implementation and while this has understandably been delayed due to the pandemic, we cannot afford to wait any longer. In Scotland, we still have far too many people suffering the ill-effects of alcohol.

To realise greater benefits from this policy, we must act to off-set the effects of inflation and the effects of the pandemic, and set the minimum unit price at a level that will save more lives and prevent a new generation from developing an unhealthy relationship with alcohol.

We call on the Scottish Government to increase the minimum unit price to 65p per unit and thereafter to ensure it keeps in line with inflation, as a very minimum.

Signed by:

Alison Douglas, CEO Alcohol Focus Scotland
Elinor Jayne, Director SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems)
Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance
Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo's Scotland
Judith Turbyne, CEO, Children in Scotland
Dr Lewis Morrison, Chair, BMA Scotland
James Jopling, Head of BHF Scotland
Pamela Healy, CEO, British Liver Trust
John Watson, Associate Director Scotland, Stroke Association
Justina Murray, CEO, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Jardine Simpson, CEO, Scottish Recovery Consortium
Annemarie Ward, CEO, Faces & Voices of Recovery UK
Niven Rennie, Director, Violence Reduction Unit
Professor Sally Casswell, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of GAPA (Global Alcohol Policy Alliance)
Dr Peter Rice, Chair of EuroCare (European Alcohol Policy Alliance)
Nina Renshaw, Policy and Advocacy Director, NCD Alliance
Professor Annie Anderson, Scottish Cancer Prevention Network
Dr Graham Foster, Chair of the Scottish Directors of Public Health
Professor Marcus Munafo, Co-Director, SPECTRUM Consortium
Andrew Horne, Executive Director, We Are With You, Scotland
Clare Cable, CEO, Queens Nursing Institute Scotland
Dr Andrew Goddard, President of the Royal College of Physicians
Dr Catriona Morton, Deputy Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland
Professor Andy Elder, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
Jackie Taylor, President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Dr Linda Findlay, Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland
Dr Julie Cavanagh, Chair of the Committee of the Faculty of Public Health Scotland
Professor Maggie Rae, President of the Faculty of Public Health
Dr Miles Mack, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland
Dr Jyotsna Vohra, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Royal Society for Public Health