

THE CONSULTATION: ALCOHOL DISCUSSION PAPER

The Scottish Government is looking for your views.

There are 7 areas where the Scottish Government invites views and these are in boxes below. Some will interest people in prisons more than others. I would encourage people to focus on the ones that stimulate discussion and views. The consultation is quite open ended. Several of the questions do not invite "yes/no" responses - rather, arguments as opposed to fixed views.

Cut Price Drinks Promotions

We invite views on the following proposals:

That regulations should be made under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 to:

- ❖ put an end to off-sales premises supplying alcohol free of charge on the purchase of one or more of the product, or of any other product, whether alcohol or not;
 - ❖ put an end to off-sales premises supplying alcohol at a reduced price on the purchase of one or more of the product, or of any other product, whether alcohol or not; and
 - ❖ prevent the sale of alcohol as a loss-leader.
- The majority of staff felt that these measures would be making the majority of sensible drinkers pay for the behaviour of a minority of problematic drinkers. There was also scepticism that this is achievable in a free market.
 - Staff felt that an end to cheap drink promotions would encourage alternative sources of alcohol i.e. black market and illicit manufacture.

Should There be a Minimum Pricing Scheme for Alcohol?

We invite views on:

- ❖ the proposed principles on which a minimum pricing scheme for alcohol products should be established.
- The majority of staff agreed with the idea of minimum pricing but everyone thought it would make little difference to the amounts problem drinkers drank.
 - Some staff would like to see evidence that separate queues and checkouts, increased pricing, age and advertising restrictions reduced the consumption of cigarettes before committing to the same measures for alcohol.

Advice to Parents (Page 23)

We will review current advice to parents and would welcome views on what particular information parents and carers would find helpful.

- The most common reply to this topic was that parents should drink sensibly and their children would see a good example of responsible drinking.
- The next most common reply was to introduce alcohol early in a young person's life at mealtimes, like the French.
- Other staff members who offered a response were of the opinion that education about recommended limits and the long term effects of alcohol should be given to youngsters.

The Minimum Age of Purchasing Alcohol (Page 24)

We invite views on whether we should raise the minimum age for off-sales purchases to 21 in Scotland.

- Most staff thought 18 was a reasonable minimum age for purchasing alcohol anywhere and some thought it should be 21 for off-sales. A minority thought it would make no difference.
- One staff member thought 21 should be the minimum age for all access to alcohol including supermarkets.
- Another thought the only solution to the nation's relationship with alcohol is to severely restrict all access for all ages.

Social Responsibility Fee (Page 30)

The proposal here is to charge licensed pubs and shops extra to take care of such things as cleaning the streets, marshalling taxi ranks, accident and emergency extra costs etc.

We invite views on the following:

- ❖ what criteria should be used to determine the types of premises (or specific premises) that should be subject to the fee? (eg late opening premises, or premises in a particular area) or conversely what criteria should be used to consider exemptions from the fee;
- ❖ how should the fee be determined (eg based on rateable values, alcohol sales turnover);
- ❖ should a fee be applied to Occasional Licences as well as Premises Licences?;

- ❖ should a similar fee be applied to other premises licensed under separate legislation? If so, what types of premises should be subject to a fee?; and
- ❖ are there any other comments you would like to make on the operation of a social responsibility fee?
- The majority of staff disagreed with the idea as indirect taxation which would be passed on to consumers.
- A small number of staff thought it would be a good idea, some had seen similar schemes working and others felt a fee for premises where trouble regularly occurred based on alcohol profits.

Advertising and Promotions

We invite views on whether regulations should be made, under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, to extend the existing regulations to:

- ❖ prevent the display on licensed premises of promotional material relating to alcohol in a way visible to persons outside the premises;
- ❖ prevent the use on licensed premises of any special display designed to promote sales of alcohol for consumption off the premises; and
- ❖ prevent on licensed premises any other promotional activity to induce the sale of alcohol for consumption off the premises.
- There was a roughly equal split between staff who thought advertising made no difference and those who thought there was a definite connection between advertising and sales of alcohol.
- One staff member would like to see the advertising of alcohol in relation to sport banned, citing the SRU (and whisky) as an example.

Separate Alcohol Checkouts

We invite views on:

- ❖ the desirability of creating separate checkouts for alcohol sales to help emphasise that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity;
- ❖ the particular criteria that should be applied in determining which types of premises should be subject to any such arrangements; and
- ❖ whether there should be a requirement for alcohol checkout staff to be at least 18 years old.
- The majority of staff thought separate alcohol checkouts were a bad idea. Some

would like to see evidence that this has made a difference in tobacco sales. A minority thought this would work to reduce alcohol consumption.

Response Details and Copies of the Discussion Paper

18 staff members took part from HMP Edinburgh, HMP & YOI Cornton Vale, HMP Perth, HMP Glenochil and HMP Barlinnie.

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 - ❖ prevent the sale of alcohol as a loss-leader.
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- The majority of prisoners felt that cut price drink and special offers did encourage increased levels of drinking but felt ending promotions would not affect the amounts people drank on its own but maybe should be part of a range of measures.
 - Some felt that it could encourage binge drinking or drinking stronger alcohol
 - Many saw ending drinks promotions as punishing the less well off or non-problem drinkers.
 - One prisoner has an odd view of drinks aimed at young drinkers: “There are far too many chemicals in the cheaper drinks, like cider and alco-pops that young people buy. Chemicals probably do as much damage, if not more, than the alcohol. Focus should be on removing these types of drinks – higher standards for drinks producers.”

Should There be a Minimum Pricing Scheme for Alcohol?

We invite views on:

- ❖ the proposed principles on which a minimum pricing scheme for alcohol products should be established.
- Prisoners were very suspicious and angered at the thought of increased pricing, especially if it involved increased profits or increased tax revenue.
- Prisoners thought that increased pricing would encourage a larger black market, illicit manufacture and acquisitive crime and even encourage drug use if alcohol were more expensive than drugs.
- Some thought that it would make no difference to amounts consumed

“Is it for the government to decide? It’s the responsibility of the individual to drink sensibly.”

Advice to Parents (Page 23)

We will review current advice to parents and would welcome views on what particular information parents and carers would find helpful.

- Money should be available for low income families, youth organisations etc to provide alternatives to drink culture.
- The younger the better for education and awareness, campaigns should concentrate on harmful effects of alcohol
- There was no confidence in the recommended safe limits, this should be evidence based. Prisoners questioned who decided safe limits and wondered why doctors disagreed on safe levels.
- Parents should be encouraged to be role models and be more involved in kids lives
- Parents should know where their children are at night time.
- A significant minority thought advice would make no difference as young people don’t listen to advice anyway

The Minimum Age of Purchasing Alcohol (Page 24)

We invite views on whether we should raise the minimum age for off-sales purchases to 21 in Scotland.

- The majority of male prisoners thought this was a bad idea however the majority of

women agreed with it. However half the women who agreed thought the age should be 18.

- Young offenders said they would find ways round increased age limits

“They can send you to fight for your country, get married and pay taxes at 16, but not have a drink till you’re 21? That’s wrong.”

Social Responsibility Fee (Page 30)

The proposal here is to charge licensed pubs and shops extra to take care of such things as cleaning the streets, marshalling taxi ranks, accident and emergency extra costs etc.

We invite views on the following:

- ❖ what criteria should be used to determine the types of premises (or specific premises) that should be subject to the fee? (eg late opening premises, or premises in a particular area) or conversely what criteria should be used to consider exemptions from the fee;
 - ❖ how should the fee be determined (eg based on rateable values, alcohol sales turnover);
 - ❖ should a fee be applied to Occasional Licences as well as Premises Licences?;
 - ❖ should a similar fee be applied to other premises licensed under separate legislation? If so, what types of premises should be subject to a fee?; and
 - ❖ are there any other comments you would like to make on the operation of a social responsibility fee?
- The majority of men disagreed with this fee, whereas the majority of women agreed with the idea, mainly as a way of reducing the sale of alcohol to underage drinkers
 - The majority thought costs would be passed on to consumers, increasing the price of alcohol even more
 - The majority thought the fee would be unfair for the majority of providers

“Shops and pubs should not be held responsible for individual’s behaviour.”

Advertising and Promotions

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 - ❖ prevent the use on licensed premises of any special display designed to promote sales of alcohol for consumption off the premises; and
 - ❖ prevent on licensed premises any other promotional activity to induce the sale of alcohol for consumption off the premises.
- The majority of male prisoners thought advertising restrictions would have no effect, whereas the majority of women and young offenders saw a direct link between advertising and alcohol consumption.

“They should stop using sports to advertise alcohol and stop glamorising the whole drink thing”.

Separate Alcohol Checkouts

We invite views on:

- ❖ the desirability of creating separate checkouts for alcohol sales to help emphasise that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity;
 - ❖ the particular criteria that should be applied in determining which types of premises should be subject to any such arrangements; and
 - ❖ whether there should be a requirement for alcohol checkout staff to be at least 18 years old.
- Everyone disagreed with the idea of separate checkouts and that it would be impractical in smaller premises.
 - There was some agreement that it may restrict underage drinking but that it would also deter responsible drinkers from buying alcohol this way.
 - The majority agreed that the minimum age of counter staff should be the same as the minimum purchasing age.

“It would be the biggest queue in the supermarket. You would just end up going to the off-licence instead.”

Response Details and Copies of the Discussion Paper

- ❖ HMP Edinburgh (9)[17-20], HMP Glenochil (6)[30-54], HMP & YOI Cornton Vale (23)[19-51], YOI Polmont (6)[not stated], HMP Dumfries (not stated)[not stated], HMP Perth (11) [18-21 all YOs]

General Comments:

“The people who make these laws are not in touch with reality or the youth of today. They don’t understand the culture and the social pressures”.

“There should be more education and alcohol awareness at High School”

“There should be serious treatment for people selling drink to under-age kids, they should be shut down”.