

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Isafbris Uned am Alcohol yng Nghymru](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Wales](#)

MUP02 : Ymateb gan: Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr | Response from: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board



Minimum Unit Price for Alcohol in Wales – Opportunity to provide feedback

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Health, prevention of crime, education, social work

1. Please describe how minimum unit pricing has impacted your day-to-day work. And has this resulted in any changes?

Response from team leads in Substance Misuse Services across North Wales who perceive the following:

The following is anecdotally taken from patients – and at present the data does not substantiate the feedback.

- An increase in people changing their drinking habits, with many dependent drinkers switching to spirits has made it more challenging to support people in community and harm reduction. It is noted that the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic may also be a contributory factor.
- Increased referrals for individuals who are binge drinking alcohol / dependent alcohol users.
- Increased demand on staff / overall service.
- Higher incidence of withdrawal-related health crisis, and additional financial needs of service users, resulting in more time being spent on staff supporting individuals with food parcels, bus tickets and with finances (e.g., bills).

2. Please describe if minimum unit pricing has impacted your overall workload?

- Yes - increased referrals, assessments – increased service demand which may be due to MUP or increased consumption of alcohol during Covid, or the rising cost of living. It is positive that more people are being seen but impacts on capacity.
- To note that acknowledgment of the research evidence recognises a reduction of alcohol consumption in moderate and non-dependent alcohol

users. It does however feel that MUP has not made a positive impact on individuals drinking at high risk or dependent levels, and that it may have added to the financial pressures they face as well as increasing risk of withdrawal.

3. Please describe what impact has minimum unit pricing had on the people you work with?

- Some service users reported unable to afford to buy alcohol which can at times lead to increased risk, managing withdrawals.
- Some individuals finding it more difficult to obtain alcohol due to the financial implications.
- Some individuals who are alcohol dependant are increasingly prioritising alcohol purchasing over paying bills, rent, food etc.
- Some individuals reported that they are switching to spirits due to the perception that they offer better value for money – this makes it significantly more challenging in supporting with community and harm reduction, and in some cases has increased alcohol consumed due to spirits coming in 28 or 40 unit increments which dictates the amount consumed daily.
- Keyworkers noted more individuals cite financial (rather than social or health) reasons for wanting to stop.

4. Please describe what impact do you think removing minimum unit pricing would have on your work?

At a Strategic level:

- North Wales Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2025-8 'refreshed' (which has been produced on behalf of the North Wales Area Planning Board in collaboration with partners across the region), have adopted a range of priorities to tackle alcohol harm which may be impacted upon.
- MUP is included as a priority within the strategy as a means of 'reducing the affordability' of alcohol.
- Evidence shows that MUP contributes to a wider policy approach to address alcohol harm, such as a safe and supportive environment in the night time economy, and the provision of early intervention in those wanting to reduce their drinking.

At an operational level:

- Potential increase in SMS service demand and referrals for dependant and binge drinkers (as outlined in boxes 1 and 2 above).

5. Please explain if there is anything else about the current minimum unit pricing policy you would like to tell us to inform future policy decisions.

- We would welcome the development of an All-Wales Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, and note that the current 'Substance Misuse Delivery plan 2019-2022 which was revised in response to COVID-19' requires updating. The process of recently refreshing the North Wales Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy has demonstrated that alcohol consumption continues to be a concern, and shifting behaviours relating to affordability, availability and attitudes would benefit from a national focus.
- Within the 'Final report – Review of the introduction of Minimum Pricing for Alcohol in Wales' we support the renewal of the legislation within the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill and the need to develop an 'active well-crafted communication' targeted to the relevant populations. We would support the production of 'once for Wales' communication to ensure consistency of message and promotion of support services.
- The Substance Misuse Service feedback reflects the need to mitigate the negative impact of the MUP on some service users, which needs further consideration.