

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](#)

MUP15: Ymateb gan: BMA Cymru Wales | Response from: BMA Cymru Wales

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Y Gymdeithas Feddygol Brydeinig  
Pumed Llawr  
2 Pentir Caspian  
Ffordd Caspian  
Bae Caerdydd  
Caerdydd  
CF10 4DQ

British Medical Association  
Fifth Floor  
2 Caspian Point  
Caspian Way  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF10 4DQ

# BMA

Cymru Wales

30 April 2025

## **Senedd Health and Social Care Committee consultation on minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Wales**

### **Response from BMA Cymru Wales**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

BMA Cymru Wales has been a strong advocate for minimum unit pricing in Wales as part of wider efforts to address alcohol-related harm. We welcome the opportunity to provide further evidence to support the Committee's inquiry into this important issue.

#### **PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF MINIMUM UNIT PRICING**

As is often the case with new public health measures, effective communication of the aims and objectives of the interventions is crucial to their success. It's reasonable to assume that Welsh public understanding of minimum unit pricing as a targeted health improvement measure has increased in recent years as the policy has been implemented in Wales, as well as in other jurisdictions, perhaps most notably in Scotland.

As more evidence emerges as to the success of minimum unit pricing as a successful intervention; saving lives, reducing hospital admissions and more generally contributing reducing harm, we would anticipate understanding of the legislation's purpose to increase.

BMA Cymru Wales would welcome further efforts to capture public behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol, as well as wider awareness and understanding of health interventions such as minimum unit pricing. This would help provide additional opportunities to gauge success of minimum unit pricing, together with the full range of interventions required to reduce alcohol-related harm.

#### **Cyfarwyddwr Cenedlaethol (Cymru)/National director (Wales):**

Rachel Podolak

#### **Cyd-brif weithredwyr/Co-chief executive officers:**

Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

Cofrestrwyd yn Gwmni Cyfyngedig trwy Warant. Rhif Cofrestredig: 8848 Lloegr  
Swyddfa gofrestredig: BMA House, Tavistock Square, Llundain, WC1H 9JP.  
Rhestrwyd yn Undeb Llafur o dan Ddeddf Undebau Llafur a Chysylltiadau Llafur 1974.  
Registered as a Company limited by Guarantee. Registered No. 8848 England.  
Registered office: BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP.  
Listed as a Trade Union under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974.



## IMPACT OF MINIMUM UNIT PRICING

The evidence emerging from the implementation of minimum unit pricing in Wales is positive, indicating a link between the policy and a reduction in alcohol use and alcohol related harm. This is, of course, to be welcomed, however, we would wish to see continued evaluation of minimum unit pricing over a longer period to ensure ongoing effectiveness of the policy's use in Wales. To this end, BMA Cymru Wales supports the extension of the policy beyond 2026.

Research indicates a broadly consistent picture between Wales and Scotland on the impact of minimum unit pricing on alcohol purchases. This includes findings that demonstrate higher prices, such as for high strength cider, are linked to higher drops in consumption<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst difficult to gauge the full causal impact of minimum unit pricing in Wales on alcohol use and associated harms, particularly at this relatively early stage of adoption, it's reassuring that there appears to be a level of consistency with research findings related to the more advanced roll-out in Scotland. This should provide assurance that the policy objectives are being realised.

Of course, whilst these findings are to be welcomed, minimum unit pricing is just one of a suite of measures required to tackle alcohol-related harm in Wales. Support is required to address the social inequalities that are shown to correlate with unhealthy drinking.

BMA Cymru Wales agrees with the recommendation from the Review of the introduction of minimum pricing for alcohol in Wales<sup>2</sup>, that the Welsh Government should note the effect of the policy on certain populations of low income and heavy drinkers and ensure that its alcohol treatment, policy, and provision meet the needs of this group.

## FUTURE OF MINIMUM UNIT PRICING IN WALES

BMA Cymru Wales supported the introduction of minimum unit pricing in Wales and, based on the promising evidence that has emerged since its implementation, we are strongly in favour of extending this provision beyond the legislation's sunset clause.

BMA Cymru Wales also believes that the minimum unit price should be subject to ongoing review to ensure effectiveness. It's clearly the case that maintaining the minimum unit price at a set level will have diminishing returns due to wider economic factors such as inflation.

There is also modelling of the Scottish MUP that demonstrates the potential impact of increasing the value to different levels<sup>3</sup>. This work prompted broad support for increasing the minimum unit price in Scotland to 65p<sup>4</sup>. It's likely the benefits outlined would similarly apply in the Welsh context and, as such, we would encourage a review to be undertaken in Wales.

As noted, minimum unit pricing is just one policy intervention of the many required to effectively tackle alcohol related harm in Wales. BMA Cymru Wales believes that there is more to be done to address this issue and support people to live healthier lives. To this end, the Welsh Government should consider

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Peter et al. The Lancet (2021) *Impact of minimum unit pricing on alcohol purchases in Scotland and Wales: controlled interrupted time series analyses*: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(21\)00052-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(21)00052-9/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government (2025) *Review of the introduction of minimum pricing for alcohol in Wales: summary*: <https://www.gov.wales/review-introduction-minimum-pricing-alcohol-wales-summary-html#161260>

<sup>3</sup> Angus, Colin et al. University of Sheffield (2023) *New modelling of alcohol pricing policies, alcohol consumption and harm in Scotland*: <https://sarg-sheffield.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/sarg-scottish-mup-report-2023.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Alcohol Focus Scotland (2024) *Open letter to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on the continuation and uprating of minimum unit pricing*: <https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/files/joint-letter-to-hscs-committee-on-mup-mar-24.pdf>

whether development of an alcohol strategy could provide a welcome focus and clarity on the full range of actions it is taking in this area.

The devolution settlement is mixed in this area, and we would encourage the Welsh and UK Governments to act collectively where appropriate to address hazardous and harmful drinking in Wales. In particular, we would welcome support for the policy proposals outlined in our *Reducing alcohol-related harm: a blueprint for Government*<sup>5</sup>. This covers a range of proposals we would like to see implemented, including:

- increasing duty on alcohol products,
- consistent mandatory labelling,
- regulations on alcohol advertising,
- establishing public health as a licencing objective; and,
- reducing the legal drink driving limit.

There are other measures wholly within the devolution settlement that we would urge further action on, including;

- ensuring alcohol education messages are delivered independently of industry,
- promoting CMO advice against drinking alcohol during pregnancy, together with targeted support measures for women with alcohol use problems, and adequate diagnostic and support services for those with prenatal alcohol exposure,
- training for healthcare professionals in identification of alcohol-related problems at early stages, together with brief interventions they can utilise in their roles; and,
- adequate support and funding for alcohol treatment services.

The WHO has set out that no level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health<sup>6</sup>. Minimum unit pricing, therefore, remains an important intervention that BMA Cymru Wales believes should be extended and strengthened. However, minimum unit pricing is just one intervention, and it must be utilised as part of much wider set of policies and measures to address harmful alcohol consumption and related health issues.

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<sup>5</sup> BMA (2018) *Reducing alcohol-related harm: a blueprint for Government*: <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2072/tackling-alcohol-related-harm-in-england.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> WHO (2023) *No level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health*: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/04-01-2023-no-level-of-alcohol-consumption-is-safe-for-our-health>