

MPA 17

Bil Iechyd y Cyhoedd (Isafbris am Alcohol) (Cymru)

Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan Coleg Brenhinol Pediatreg a Iechyd Plant Cymru

Response from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales



**Written evidence submitted by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry into the general principles of the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill**

**About the RCPCH**

The RCPCH works to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise. We have over 500 members in Wales and over 17,500 worldwide. The RCPCH is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. We also advocate on behalf of members, represent their views and draw upon their expertise to inform policy development and the maintenance of professional standards.

For further information please contact Gethin Jones, External Affairs Manager for Wales:

██████████ or ██████████.

**Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) in Wales**

We welcome the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill, which we believe will have a significant positive impact on child health in Wales. With MUP to be introduced in Scotland in May, we are pleased to see this action in Wales which will offer children and young people similar protection from the harms associated with alcohol consumption.

In January 2017, we published the State of Child Health<sup>1</sup> report and alongside it a Recommendations for Wales<sup>2</sup> document, with policy proposals based on the data contained in the report. These documents made the case for introducing MUP to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/SoCH%202017%20UK%20web%20updated.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/SOCH-recommendations-Wales-eng-lang.pdf>

13 percent of fifteen year olds in Wales admit to drinking alcohol once a week and alcohol abuse remains a concern for young people in Wales. Young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years are more likely to binge drink (drinking multiple drinks in a row), which is linked with other health risk behaviours such as unprotected or regretted sexual activity, antisocial and criminal behaviour, and self-harm and thoughts of suicide. Alcohol use among school-aged children often predicts negative social and health outcomes into adulthood<sup>3</sup>.

On this basis, we called upon the Welsh Government to implement Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol in Wales.

### **Alcohol and child health**

The British Medical Association have also made this case from a child health point of view. They argue that “large number of children are born every year in the UK with lifelong physical, behavioural or cognitive disabilities caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy. These disorders have a substantial impact on the lives of individuals affected, and those around them”<sup>4</sup> and their report, *Alcohol and pregnancy: Preventing and managing fetal alcohol spectrum disorders*<sup>5</sup> calls for the introduction of MUP as a key part of a wider suite of policies to reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption.

The Substance Misuse Programme within Public Health Wales has noted the role of alcohol in accidents leading to children and young people dying:

“The CDRP team recognise the relevance of considering alcohol as a factor in deaths amongst younger people, with the recent review on deaths through drowning amongst children and young people aged up to 24 in Wales reporting that eight of the 26 cases were linked to alcohol”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Newbury-Birch D. Impact of alcohol consumption on young people: a systematic review of published reviews. 2009.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/policy-and-research/public-and-population-health/alcohol/alcohol-and-pregnancy>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bma.org.uk/-/media/files/pdfs/working%20for%20change/improving%20health/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-report-feb2016.pdf?la=en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/LEADR%20report%20FINAL%20for%20publication%20Jan%202017.pdf>