



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Minimum Unit Price) (Wales) Regulations 2019**

DATE **15 October 2019**

BY **Vaughan Gething AM, Minister for Health and Social Services**

Today, I have laid the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Minimum Unit Price) (Wales) Regulations 2019. These regulations – if agreed by the National Assembly – will introduce a minimum unit price (MUP) for alcohol of 50p.

Alcohol is a major cause of death and illness in Wales and the introduction of an MUP will make an important contribution in tackling the health risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

Our new *Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-22*, which will be published shortly, contains a number of actions to tackle alcohol-related harm, including ensuring appropriate and responsive alcohol misuse services are in place before an MUP is implemented.

As we have developed the MUP policy, concerns have been raised about the potential impact of the MUP on people who are dependent on alcohol and heavy drinkers who may switch to illegal drugs or psychoactive substances, following an increase in the price of alcohol. In March 2018, the National Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee recommended the Welsh Government undertake research into this issue. While this risk is considered to be low, we will monitor this closely. We have commissioned specific research to look at this issue, which will be published later this month.

In May 2019, I issued a Written Statement about our consultation on the preferred level of a 50p MUP, noting our intention to lay these Regulations. We referred the draft Regulations to the EU Commission in accordance with the Technical Standards and Regulations Directive 2015/1535/EU, which was followed by a three-month standstill period, during which the Welsh Government could not lay the draft regulations.

We subsequently received notification that an EU Member State had submitted a detailed opinion, which extended the standstill period by an additional three months to 21 August 2019. A detailed response was submitted setting out the Welsh Government's justification for introducing a MUP policy in Wales and why the Welsh Government remains committed in introducing this legislation.

We have worked closely with retailers, the alcohol industry, public health and substance misuse stakeholders to develop guidance and additional supporting materials about minimum pricing for alcohol.

We will introduce communications campaigns for retailers and the general public in the run-up to implementation, which will continue to promote the public health aims of the legislation.

The intended effect of this legislation is to tackle alcohol-related harm, including alcohol-attributable hospital admissions and alcohol-related deaths in Wales, by reducing alcohol consumption in hazardous and harmful drinkers.

These Regulations will be debated by the National Assembly on 12 November 2019 and, if they are approved, an MUP of 50p will be introduced from 2 March 2020.

<http://www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/Pages/Plenary.aspx?assembly=5&category=Laid%20Document>