

**Evidence.  
Policy.  
Partnership.**



Dear Members of the North South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group,

This newsletter provides updates on recent alcohol research and policy relevant to Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In the July edition there are a number of data and research publications, including the final evaluation report on minimum unit pricing of alcohol in Scotland, a recently published report on the impact of COVID-19 on people who use services and providers in Northern Ireland, as well an analysis of the relationship between addiction treatment data and geographic deprivation in Ireland.

Also featured is an extensive range of alcohol policy and legislation resources which have been collated by the Health Research Board. The July newsletter also includes details of the Scottish 'See beyond, See the lives' anti-stigma campaign to encourage greater public awareness and compassion for those experiencing problems with substance use and their families.

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## Data and research

### Evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Scotland: A synthesis of the evidence



Public Health Scotland (PHS) has published the **final report** on the independent evaluation of the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol in Scotland. Evidence shows that MUP has had a positive impact on health outcomes, including addressing alcohol-related health inequalities. It has reduced deaths directly caused by alcohol consumption by an estimated 13.4% and hospital admissions by 4.1%, with the largest

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reductions seen in men and those living in the 40% most deprived areas.

[Read the final report here](#)

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## **Model-based appraisal of Minimum Unit Pricing and Promotion Restrictions for alcohol in Northern Ireland: An adaptation of the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model**

Findings from this modelling study by Colin Angus (University of Sheffield) showed that:



- MUP and/or a ban on price-based promotions would reduce alcohol consumption, leading to fewer alcohol-attributable deaths, hospital admissions, criminal offences and workplace absences.
- MUP is more effective than promotion bans at targeting the drinking of increasing and higher risk drinkers.
- MUP is estimated to have the largest impact on the alcohol consumption and health of the poorest drinkers, leading to a reduction in existing health inequalities.
- MUP would lead to a reduction in government revenue from alcohol taxes, but this would be more than offset by reductions in costs due to alcohol in the NHS, criminal justice system, the economy and wider society.

[Read the report here](#)

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## Improving alcohol health literacy and reducing alcohol consumption: recommendations for Germany



Improving alcohol health literacy presents an integrated approach to alcohol prevention and an important complement to alcohol policy. The aim of this study was to identify and prioritise measures to enhance alcohol health literacy and hence to reduce alcohol consumption, using Germany as an example.

[Access the abstract here](#)

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## Minimum unit pricing and the messiness of evidence-based policy

In this commentary, Dr Aveek Bhattacharya writes that Scotland's minimum unit pricing policy has been an admirable policy approach by the Scottish Government, with a commitment to implementing and reviewing it over a 6-year period and engaging a range of independent researchers to assess it. Dr Bhattacharya notes that balance of probabilities counts in favour of MUP, as the evidence so far is consistent with the theory of pricing policies.



[Read the commentary here](#)

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## Northern Ireland Drug and Alcohol Alliance (NIADA): Impacts of COVID-19 on People Who Use Services and Providers



This research study aimed to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on NIADA clients' substance use, related behaviours and the delivery of services. The research found that while almost two-thirds (58%) of those surveyed used one main drug during the pandemic, 42% used two or more other drugs. Alongside boredom, feeling anxious or depressed (92%) and social isolation (81%) were also given as reasons for increased drug usage. In those aged 30-44 years old, being furloughed and working

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from home were substantial factors for some clients.

[Access the study here](#)

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## **Analysis of the relationship between addiction treatment data and geographic deprivation in Ireland**

The aim of this small-scale research project was to demonstrate the potential for geographic analysis of the HRB addiction (alcohol and other drugs) treatment data when mapped onto area-based disadvantage using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. The relationship between disadvantage and drug and alcohol treatment was evident, with 293 treatments per 10,000 population in very and extremely disadvantaged areas, while the treatment rate ranged from 61-66 per 10,000 population in areas designated as affluent or very and extremely affluent.



[Read more about this research here](#)

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## **The cost to society of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity in Northern Ireland**



Research commissioned by the British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland estimates the overall annual cost to society of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity in Northern Ireland is around £1.9 billion – the equivalent to 4.5% of the Northern Ireland economy. It is estimated that the annual cost to society of alcohol consumption in Northern Ireland is £1 billion.

[For more information click here](#)

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## Reducing Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and the Incidence of FASD: Is the Past Prologue?

This narrative review summarises and synthesises the clinical trials and randomized clinical trials that evaluated selected and targeted approaches to reducing preconception and prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) and alcohol-exposed pregnancy (AEP) since 2011.



[Read more about this research here](#)

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## Policy and Legislation

### Health Research Board resources on Irish and international alcohol-related legislation and other policy research



The Health Research Board National Drugs Library has its own dedicated section collating research about alcohol policy in Ireland and further afield. This resource has information about alcohol laws, research covering alcohol policy in Ireland and internationally, Oireachtas debates that discuss alcohol policy, and more.

[Access the resources here](#)

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## Consultations

### Summary of Responses to the Consultation on Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol)

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland has published a summary of responses to its consultation on MUP. 521 formal responses were received. In general feedback was split, with the majority of responses from individuals disagreeing with the introduction of MUP while organisations tended to be supportive. The Department of Health will now consider these responses in more detail, alongside updated modelling of the potential



impacts of MUP in Northern Ireland and bring forward policy options for consideration. Any decision on these policy options will be taken by the next Health Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive.

[Read the report here](#)

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## North South Cooperation

### British-Irish Council Workshop



On Wednesday 28 June, the British-Irish Council hosted an online workshop on Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP). The workshop was opened by Minister Hildegard Naughton, Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, followed by a presentation by Dr Eric Carlin (WHO) and Colin Angus (University of Sheffield). Dr Helen McAvoy (Institute of Public Health) presented on the implementation of MUP in Ireland, whilst Clare Beeston (Public Health Scotland) reported on the final evaluation of MUP in Scotland and Prof Wulf Livingston (Glyndwr University) shared interim findings on Minimum Pricing of Alcohol in Wales.

[Read about the British-Irish Council here](#)

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## Treatment Services

### Model of Care for People with Mental Disorder and Co-existing Substance Use Disorder (Dual Diagnosis)

The Dual Diagnosis National Clinical Programme is mandated to design, develop and implement an evidence-based system of supports for individuals with a dual diagnosis. This model of care caters to the needs of adolescents and adults through separate clinical pathways to help deliver services in a more targeted and age-



appropriate manner. There is a plan to include behavioural addiction disorders, such as, gambling and gaming disorders, as part of the dual diagnosis service provision at a later stage.

[Access the report here](#)

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## Alcohol Treatment Services



In this report, the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts make recommendations in relation to treatment for alcohol dependency. While welcoming ring-fenced funding for drug and alcohol recovery services and an increase in the numbers of people in treatment, the Committee recommended addressing key issues, such as, funding uncertainty for local authorities, barriers to accessing treatment, local variations in outcomes, and severe and worsening workforce shortages.

[Access the report here](#)

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## Innovation of the month

### Working Better with Ethnically and Linguistically Diverse Populations - Good Practice Guidance for Drugs, Alcohol and Homeless Services in Ireland

This guide was developed for drug, alcohol, and homeless services to support them in their endeavours to provide culturally competent, inclusive services for people from ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. The work was commissioned by Community Response with support from the South Inner City Drug and Alcohol Task Force, and developed through desktop research by Quality Matters. This guidance draws from Irish and international standards and good practice.



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**See beyond, See the lives Campaign**



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The original 'See beyond, See the lives' campaign was developed in Canada. This project set out to develop a Scottish version of the anti-stigma campaign. The campaign shares hard-hitting stories and videos in the form of a letter to their loved one who has died. The campaigners hope the stories and images will shatter myths surrounding drug and alcohol use and death and encourage the public to show compassion for those experiencing problems with substance use and the people left behind when a loved one dies.

[Access the campaign here](#)

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## Events



### **WHO/EU Evidence into Action webinar series on Alcohol and Public health.**

WHO Europe is launching a series of webinars aimed at anyone with an interest in alcohol from a public health perspective. All webinars are free to attend. Registration in advance is required.

- **Alcohol, inequalities and inequities** – evidence and policy options - 5 July 2023 at 13:00
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- **Alcohol and cancer** – an overlooked link and decades of evidence and implications for policy - 12 July 2023 at 13:00
- **Alcohol use disorders** – early detection and treatment - 25 July 2023 at 09:00
- **Alcohol cultures and stigma** – overview of key concepts – 4 September 2023 at 09:00

[Click here to register](#)

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## **Advancing alcohol research in Ireland**

The Health Research Board (HRB), in partnership with the Department of Health, will hold a research conference, "Advancing Alcohol Research in Ireland, on **Thursday, 14 September 2023, at the Gibson Hotel in Dublin.**

The conference will bring together experts in the field of alcohol research to discuss evidence-based policy, existing and proposed legislation governing alcohol use, availability, and related harms. Attendees will learn about policy monitoring in other jurisdictions, and the importance of research that is trusted and independent. This event will also provide practical information on how to use the HRB's National Drugs Library and on potential sources of funding for research in this area.

Posters will also be presented on the day - the deadline for posters / abstracts is 3 July. For more information, contact Rachel [rtobin@hrb.ie](mailto:rtobin@hrb.ie).

The conference will be limited to those with no conflict of interest and with an interest in alcohol research - to be added to the mailing list, email [rtobin@hrb.ie](mailto:rtobin@hrb.ie).

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## Reaching out: Helping services to engage with the most vulnerable drinkers

Alcohol Change UK is hosting an online conference, over two half-days on Wednesday 18 October and Thursday 19 October 2023.

The people facing the most serious alcohol issues often face the greatest difficulties accessing the support they need. At this online learning event, participants will hear from people with personal and professional experience about how we can reach out better.

[Register here](#)

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