

Minimum price for alcohol Bill approved

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill is part of the Welsh Government's wider efforts to reduce excessive drinking, recognising the impacts this can have on people's health and well-being.

The new law will address longstanding and specific health concerns around the effects of excess alcohol consumption, which is estimated to lead to nearly 55,000 alcohol-related hospital admissions a year, costing the Welsh NHS over £150m annually. In 2016, there were 504 alcohol-related deaths in Wales.

The legislation supports the Welsh Government's comprehensive strategy to tackle hazardous and harmful drinking by tackling the availability and affordability of cheap, strong alcohol, which is part of wider efforts to improve and protect the health of the population of Wales.

Following approval by Assembly Members, the Bill will become law once it has received Royal Assent.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I'm very pleased the National Assembly has given its seal of approval to our landmark legislation.

"Last year alone, there were over 500 alcohol-related deaths and nearly 55,000 alcohol-related hospital admissions in Wales, with the direct health care costs attributable to alcohol amounting to an estimated £159m. But even more of an issue – is the devastation that lies behind these figures. Devastation for families, impacts on communities, and consequences for our NHS staff and support services – as they all cope with the aftermath of alcohol-related death and disease, every day.

"This legislation provides us with an opportunity for a step change. It gives us a chance to do more to address alcohol-related harms. And ultimately, it gives us a chance to do more to try to save lives. This legislation takes a sensible, targeted approach to a very real and evident problem in Wales today. But it will be supported by a range of additional actions being taken forward to support those in need – forming part of the Welsh Government's wider Substance Misuse Strategy.

"Wales, like so many other western countries, has a problem with cheap, strong, readily-available alcohol. This legislation will make an important contribution to addressing this issue."

Once enacted, the new law will allow Welsh Ministers to introduce a minimum

unit price for alcohol supplied in Wales. It will make it an offence for alcohol to be supplied below a minimum price made up of that minimum unit price, the strength of the alcohol and its volume, specifically targeting cheap, strong alcohol.

The legislation will target and aim to reduce the amount of alcohol being consumed by hazardous and harmful drinkers, whilst minimising impacts on moderate drinkers.

The level of the minimum unit price for this purpose will be specified in regulations made by the Welsh Ministers following a consultation this year.

The new minimum pricing regime is currently expected to come into force during the summer of 2019.