

Briefing: Alcohol Minimum Unit Price could save almost 8000 lives in North of England - February 2020

Purpose:

This briefing note is intended for colleagues in the NHS, local government and wider organisations with an interest in reducing alcohol harm in communities across the North of England.

Background:

Many health groups have been campaigning for the introduction of a minimum unit price (MUP) for alcohol in England to reduce the harm caused by cheap, strong alcohol.

Local authorities in the North West and North East regions have been meeting for a number of years to discuss how the measure could be introduced to benefit their communities.

Those meetings resulted in the University of Sheffield receiving funding from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to calculate the benefits of a 50p MUP at local authority level for the first time. These figures are now available for all upper tier local authorities in the North West, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber and have been shared with local authority chief executives, directors of public health and local MPs.

The project has the support of the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) and has also been welcomed by the [Alcohol Health Alliance \(AHA\)](#), a coalition of more than 50 organisations chaired by Prof. Sir Ian Gilmore, working together to reduce the harm caused by alcohol.

A Minimum Unit Price of 50p per unit was introduced in Scotland in May 2018. More information on MUP and its introduction in Scotland can be found here: <https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/campaigns-policy/minimum-pricing/>

The North of England suffers most from the harm of alcohol both in terms of health and crime. The key finding from this piece of research is that **the North of England would benefit most from MUP and that almost half of the deaths and hospital admissions prevented in England would be in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber.**

Research:

The research from the University of Sheffield reveals that a 50p MUP in England would see alcohol consumption in some areas in the North falling by almost twice the national average, leading to greater reductions in alcohol attributable deaths, hospital admissions and crimes. Almost half of the deaths and hospital admissions prevented and 39% of the crimes avoided would come from the three Northern regions – the North West, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Key findings from the research indicate that in the North:

- An estimated 7,816 deaths attributable to alcohol would be prevented over the next 20 years, 48% of the total for England

- Alcohol consumption would fall by 6% in the North of England, with by far the biggest reductions coming amongst the heaviest drinkers. Every year high risk drinkers would cut their consumption by the equivalent of around 14 bottles of vodka a year, while the average moderate drinker would reduce their drinking by less than half a bottle of vodka a year
- Alcohol attributable hospital admissions would reduce by an estimated 13,820, reducing pressure on the NHS, with people from the poorest communities seeing the biggest falls
- The criminal justice system would also benefit, with crimes falling by 21,128 a year.
- Researchers estimate that cost savings to the NHS in the North alone would amount to £37m a year

Current activity:

A task group for the North of England, chaired by David Parr OBE, CEO of Halton Borough Council, is working across the health and care system on specific actions that will make the case for the introduction of MUP. Julie Webster, Wirral Council, is the lead Director of Public Health for alcohol harm and MUP in Cheshire & Merseyside.

Councils across the North of England have received their local data from the research and have shared the data with their stakeholders. A template motion was prepared to allow councils to gain support for MUP through their health and wellbeing boards and other formal groups.

Next steps:

Insight work with the public is currently underway in Cheshire & Merseyside and a set of recommendations for public engagement in MUP will be produced and shared.

A parliamentary event with Northern MPs is to be held on 25th March in the House of Commons where MPs can review the evidence for implementing a MUP and support can be gained.

A media release will be sent out w/c 24 February 2020 based on the information presented above, ahead of Wales introducing MUP on the 2nd March. This will be sent proactively to the media under the ADPH brand.

How you can help:

Please read the AHA MUP document attached to this briefing and share widely across the health and care system.

Further advice:

- **North East - Balance the North East Alcohol Office – 0191 333 7140/
info@balancenortheast.co.uk**
- **Yorkshire and the Humber - scrosby@wakefield.gov.uk**
- **North West – Champs Public Health Collaborative – 0151 666 5123
adammaior@wirral.gov.uk**