Although I see the logic behind the proposed price-rises, as with all attempts to modify behaviour patterns, there needs to be carrot as well as stick. Better alternatives need to be recognised by the problem drinkers out there for themselves to indulging to excess. The same goes for smoking, obesity, gang-membership, gambling, etc. For many, getting drunk represents the only acceptable life-style. Your dad did it, and his father before him. It was a way of escaping temporarily from the grim reality (of poverty, of a lousy job, of a dad relationship, etc). Reformed alcoholics, drug-addicts, ex-gang-members: they all say the same: it wasn't till I realised there was an alternative to the ultimately miserable life I had chosen that I woke up to a better reality. The key seems to be that the individual has to find this for himself / herself. This does not mean that the State and Services should not help; but it works better when the assistance is more at arm's length - otherwise it is perceived as patronising, and, in the end, the individual will reject it because he / she does not have ownership of the alternative. Reformed alcoholics could be beneficial in this process, because they understand and empathise with the victim. They are not presenting a "We know what's good for you" approach.

The sanction of more expensive booze may help, though the few pence difference in price certainly will not deter the determined drinker. Out of interest, who will collect the extra revenue: the manufacturer or the government? It might be nice to see this more as a tax to be hypothecated towards alcohol-related health costs. But governments of all persuasions dislike using the word "tax" nowadays! One might need to monitor cross-border activity, since the UK government doesn't appear to want to follow suit in this policy. Doubtless there will be attempts by some "entrepreneurs" to overcome paying extra by ordering on the internet, too. Let's see how it goes...

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