Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill

South West Scotland Community Justice Authority

This response is submitted by South West Scotland Community Justice Authority (CJA). Scotland’s eight CJAs are non-political bodies, established via the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005, with the aim of working in partnership to reduce reoffending. South West Scotland CJA covers the areas of Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway. Further information on our work is available at www.swscja.org.uk.

South West Scotland Community Justice Authority welcomes the introduction of the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill and the opportunity to feed in comments to the Committee. Since June 2010, we have been undertaking a focused and ongoing programme of work on alcohol and offending. At the centre of this programme lies our recognition of the significant impact of both alcohol misuse and offending behaviour on our communities.

We acknowledge that both the causes and the solutions are complex and intertwined, and recognise the gap between how we feel about our country (a strong ‘pride’ in Scotland – which is an asset) and what we actually see and experience in our local communities (Scotland’s culture of alcohol – which is a challenge).

Scotland’s relationship with alcohol is complex and enduring, and only a robust and comprehensive package of measures can hope to address this. We believe tackling Scotland’s relationship with alcohol is essential if we are to significantly reduce re-offending, and believe that minimum pricing should form a core part of a wider package of measures to achieve this aim.

We have drafted a Joint Statement on Alcohol and Offending, which has been formally approved by SWSCJA and two of our four local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs). We anticipate that the remaining two ADPs will formally endorse the Statement at their forthcoming meetings.

We have attached our draft Joint Statement as our submission to the Committee – it outlines:

- Our shared interest in reducing re-offending through tackling our relationship with alcohol.
- The link between offending and alcohol consumption.
- The costs of offending and re-offending, and the potential savings to be made through minimum pricing.
- Acknowledgement that we are part of a wide body of support across Scotland in favour of using a pricing mechanism to reduce consumption.
- The additional mechanisms which should make up the wider package of measures, alongside minimum pricing.
This submission responds to the Committee’s request for views on:

- The advantages and disadvantages of establishing a minimum alcohol sales price based on a unit of alcohol.
- Any other aspects of the Bill.

We do not have a view on:

- The level at which such a proposed minimum price should be set and the justification for that level.

Justina Murray
Chief Officer
South West Scotland Community Justice Authority
12 December 2011

**Shared Statement on Alcohol and Offending**

1. This Shared Statement on Alcohol and Offending has been developed jointly by South West Scotland Community Justice Authority and the four Alcohol and Drug Partnerships of Dumfries & Galloway, East, North and South Ayrshire in recognition of the significant impact of alcohol misuse and offending behaviour on our communities.

2. The purpose of this shared statement is to outline our shared issues, to acknowledge that both the causes and the solutions are complex and intertwined and to set out our ongoing commitment to work together to address these issues and deliver our shared outcomes.

3. South West Scotland Community Justice Authority was established via the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005, with the aim of working in partnership to reduce re-offending, and to create a safer, strong Scotland. CJAs are non-political bodies, governed by boards of Elected Members representing constituent local authorities, and supported by a range of partners with an interest in reducing re-offending.

4. Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) were established following the 2009 launch of a New Framework for Local Partnerships on Alcohol and Drugs. The ADPs replaced the previous model of Alcohol and Drug Action Teams and are embedded in local community planning arrangements. Alcohol and Drug Partnerships are responsible for developing and implementing local strategies for tackling alcohol and drugs.

5. “Changing Scotland’s Relationship with Alcohol: A Framework for Action” recognises that the use (and misuse) of alcohol is embedded in our culture and that it is no longer sufficient to target specific groups in society, rather a ‘whole population approach’ is required. It is estimated there are over one million hazardous drinkers and almost quarter of a million
harmful drinkers in Scotland.\textsuperscript{1} In 2009, over-18s in Scotland consumed the equivalent of 12.2 litres of pure alcohol per person.\textsuperscript{2}

6. Scotland’s relationship with alcohol is complex and enduring, and only a robust and comprehensive package of measures can hope to address this.

7. The Alcohol etc (Scotland) Act 2010 received royal assent in December 2010 and provides part of this package of measures. We welcome the Scottish Parliament’s support for the general principles of the Act, and specifically for restricting off-sale promotions and promotional activity; requiring licensees to operate an age verification policy; and introducing the broad framework for a social responsibility levy.

8. We welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to introducing a minimum pricing mechanism in new legislation, as a priority, following the 2011 Scottish Parliament election.

9. Offending and re-offending have significant financial costs for Scotland’s economy and for Scotland’s communities. It is estimated that the total cost of offending represents 4% of public sector expenditure. For South West Scotland this is approximately £170m per annum. In addition the personal and social costs for offenders, victims, families and communities are acute. We have all directly witnessed these costs, through our contact with offenders and the wider criminal justice community, and as members of our own local communities.

10. The link between alcohol consumption and offending is well evidenced, with \textit{“a strong association between alcohol consumption and an individual’s risk of being either a perpetrator or a victim of violence”} (World Health Organisation 2008\textsuperscript{iii}). For example:

- 50% of prisoners report being drunk at the time of their offence.\textsuperscript{iv}
- In the summer of 2010, the Strathclyde Police Chief Constable reported that 14 of 18 murders in a 10 week period in Strathclyde were alcohol-related.
- 70% of assaults presenting to Accident and Emergency Departments are alcohol-related.\textsuperscript{v}
- In 62% of cases, victims of violent crime perceive that their attacker was under the influence of alcohol (this compares to 50% in England). In 30% of cases, victims themselves admit to consuming alcohol immediately before the incident\textsuperscript{vi}.

11. We believe that reducing alcohol consumption will consequently reduce levels of offending, in turn reducing levels of harm to individuals, families and communities affected by offending.

12. We also recognise the strong parallels between desistance from offending and recovery from addiction. In our wider work to build recovery or
desistance capital, we can achieve shared outcomes around, for example, family and community support or improved employability.

13. We are part of a wide body of support across Scotland in favour of using a pricing mechanism to reduce consumption, including our CJA partners in local authorities, health, police and the third sector. We recognise that 81% of respondents to the Health and Sport Committee’s call for evidence supported minimum pricing on the basis of its health and social benefits.

14. Since 1980 alcohol has become significantly more affordable. As it has become cheaper, consumption and alcohol-related mortality have increased.

15. Modelling carried out on minimum pricing estimated that the 45p minimum price per unit of alcohol that was proposed in the Alcohol Bill together with an off-sales discount ban would decrease alcohol consumption by 6.7%. This reduction in consumption was in turn anticipated to:

- Reduce crimes by 4,100 per year including 600 violent offences;
- Directly save £3.5 million per year in crime costs; and
- Gain £2.4 million in consequently increased quality of life savings.

16. Lower income groups have a higher proportion of harmful drinkers compared to higher income groups, and almost two-thirds of all alcohol-related deaths in Scotland are amongst the most deprived population groups. Similarly research carried out in 2003 identified that a higher proportion of prisoners come from the most deprived local authority wards as compared to less deprived areas.

“Harmful alcohol use diminishes the capacity of individuals, families and communities to build prosperous lives. It effectively entrenches disadvantage” (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol, April 2009).

17. We welcome the introduction of the broad framework for a Social Responsibility Levy, which recognises that although minimum pricing is expected to reduce alcohol consumption, the higher unit price will result in increased income for retailers. We would welcome this funding being made available locally to use to offset the cost of alcohol-related harm and await the Scottish Government consultation on the operation of the levy.

18. We ask all parties and all partners to continue to work constructively together to change Scotland’s relationship with alcohol. In doing so we can contribute to reducing re-offending and building a safer, stronger and healthier Scotland.

19. We will continue to support and develop local interventions which address both the misuse of alcohol and offending behaviour, such as the delivery of alcohol brief interventions in criminal justice settings, early intervention
to divert individuals from prosecution, or the delivery of alcohol treatment requirements as part of a community payback order.

20. Community Justice Authorities are non-political bodies with a strong track record of multi-party and multi-agency working to the benefit of our communities. Alcohol and Drug Partnerships are part of the community planning process in each local authority area and are committed to engaging with local communities to deliver positive outcomes. In endorsing this Shared Statement on Alcohol and Offending, we continue to put the needs of our communities first.

References

A number of the following sources were obtained via the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPiCe) Briefing on the Alcohol (etc) Scotland Bill (2010), Alcohol Focus Scotland, BMA Scotland, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems, and the Scottish Parliament’s Health and Sport Committee.

i York Health Economics Consortium 2010
ii Nielson Industry data, NHS Health Scotland 2010
v Alcohol Focus ‘In Focus’, July 2010.
v Alcohol Statistics Scotland, ISD, 2009

vi Supporters of minimum pricing as an effective measure for governments seeking to reduce alcohol consumption and therefore harm include: UK House of Commons Health Select Committee; World Health Organisation; National Institute for Clinical Excellence; Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems; Alcohol Focus Scotland; British Medical Association Scotland; The Welsh Assembly Government (Labour – Plaid Cymru coalition).

vii Those in favour of minimum pricing identified via the Committee’s call for evidence include 100% of academics, alcohol misuse organisations, children and young people’s organisations, health bodies and police who submitted evidence (SPiCe, February 2010).

viii Scottish Health Action on Alcohol, April 2009
ix Alcohol Statistics Scotland, ISD, 2009