

APPENDIX A

Letter to Members of Cabinet
Local Authorities in Cheshire & Merseyside

Re: Reducing Alcohol Harm – Minimum Unit Pricing

As Clinicians in Cheshire & Merseyside, we welcome the recent Government proposals to introduce the ban on sales of alcohol below the rate of duty plus VAT, as an important first move in the right direction. However, we would still recommend that steps be taken to pursue a minimum price of 50p per unit as an integral part of a range of measures to tackle our rising alcohol problem.

We know that politicians will be concerned about public opinion and the impact on people's pockets. However, they should also note that the public are very much aware of the effect of pocket money prices on consumption. Recent Home Office Research (published 18 January 2011)¹ showed that two-thirds of the public believe the amount of alcohol people drink in Britain is out of control. The research also showed that 93% of heavier drinkers under the age of 35 say they have witnessed alcohol-related crime and disorder in the past 12 months.

The alcohol business continues to tell the Government that information is all that is necessary. However as the Health Secretary, the Chief Medical Officer, the World Health Organisation and the public have all recognised there is also a link between price, consumption and harm that can no longer be ignored.

In terms of cost to a moderate drinker, the impact of 50p per unit would be minimal. Prices in licensed premises would not be affected as the minimum price of a pint of lager for example would be £1.50. For the take home market a 750ml bottle of wine (12%) would cost approximately £4.50 and six 500ml cans of lager (4%) would cost roughly £6.

Currently alcohol is available in some outlets in Cheshire and Merseyside as cheap as 10p a unit. Commonly supermarket brand cider is sold for under £1 per litre. With the introduction of 50p minimum unit price a litre bottle of cider (5.5%) could not be sold for less than £6.

Surveys in the North West have found that up to 45% of the public polled would support a minimum unit price for alcohol, including in one survey 48% of young people. The support base for minimum unit price has also increased from earlier surveys. Just this week, a flash poll was conducted by the UK's leading discount website and the results showed that two thirds of Britons support the proposed plans for minimum pricing on alcohol; with the majority hoping that

¹ www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/alcohol/alcohol-pricing

the plans will help tackle binge drinking². 94.4% of publicans indicate that supermarket price promotions have adversely affected their trade and 90.7% of them would support a minimum unit price³.

We understand the local authorities within Cheshire and Warrington will be taking papers to their Cabinets to seek the endorsement of a minimum unit price of 50p and the agreement to work together to explore the proposal of a bylaw.

We hope our support will strengthen the argument to pursue minimum unit pricing.

Yours sincerely

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore – President, Royal College of Physicians & Consultant, The Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust

Dr Steve Hood – Clinical Lead for Alcohol Services Aintree Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Liverpool & member of Liverpool City Alcohol Strategy Group

Dr Paul Bowen – GP, Chair, Eastern Cheshire Commissioning Consortium

Dr Peter Enevoldson - Medical Director & Consultant Neurologist Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Gordon Ramsden – Medical Director, Warrington & Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Andrew Davies – GP, Chair, Warrington Health Consortium

Dr Andrew Wilson – Lead GP South Consortia (Cheshire East)

Dr Huw Charles-Jones – GP, Chair, Western Cheshire Health Consortium

² www.alcohol-help.co.uk/two-thirds-of-britons-welcome-minimum-pricing-on-alcohol

³ Our Life, Manchester