

Minimum price for alcohol Bill becomes Law

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 is part of the Welsh Government's wider efforts to reduce excessive drinking, recognising the impacts it 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.

The Bill was approved by the National Assembly for Wales in June.

A Bill receives Royal Assent when Letters Patent under the Welsh Seal signed with Her Majesty's own hand signifying Her Assent are notified to the Clerk of the Assembly. The Bill then becomes an Act of the Assembly.

The Ceremony where the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones applied the Welsh Seal to the Letters Patent was attended by the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones said:

"This legislation takes a sensible, targeted approach to a very real and evident problem in Wales today, by tackling the availability and affordability of cheap, strong alcohol.

"In Wales, we have a proud tradition of taking action to protect the health of the public. This new law is part of our wider efforts to improve and protect the health of the population of Wales."

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I'm delighted our landmark legislation to tackle the availability of cheap, strong alcohol in Wales has now become law.

"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.

"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.”

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 which will be launched this autumn.

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