

Inquiry into alcohol and substance misuse / Ymchwiliad i gamddefnyddio alcohol a sylweddau

Evidence from British Beer & Pub Association – ASM 21 / Tystiolaeth gan Cymdeithas Cwrw a Thafarndai Prydain – ASM 21



National Assembly for Wales' Health and Social Care Committee - Inquiry into alcohol and substance misuse – draft British Beer & Pub Association comments

The British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) is the leading organisation representing the brewing and pub sector. Our members account for 90% of beer brewed in the United Kingdom and own around half of Britain's 49,500 public houses. The beer and pub sector is committed to reducing the harmful use of alcohol and encouraging responsible consumption and we welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry by the Welsh Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee into alcohol and substance misuse.

Our brewing and pub operating member companies work in collaboration with the UK Government through the Public Health Responsibility Deal and with a range of other stakeholders on developing initiatives to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and we would welcome closer dialogue with the Welsh Government. Whilst issues relating to alcohol misuse remain, there have been some substantial achievements, including:

- 80% of products on shelf now including clear unit content, NHS guidelines and a warning about drinking when pregnant
- One billion alcohol units removed from the UK market through product innovation and reformulation of existing brands
- Robust industry commitment to preventing underage sales including full implementation of the Challenge 21 and 25 campaigns and industry funding for the re-launch of PASS the Proof of Age Standards Scheme
- Roll out of customer alcohol unit awareness information in the on and off-trade
- Ongoing support of £5 million annually for Drinkaware, the independent alcohol awareness charity
- A robust system of self-regulation to ensure responsible advertising and marketing of alcohol brands

- Support for Pubwatch, Best Bar None, Purple Flag, Business Improvement Districts, Community Alcohol Partnerships and other local partnership initiatives which operate in local communities and bring together licensees, police and other local stakeholders to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and promote a safer night-time economy

We are committed to working with the UK and Welsh Government wherever we can to continue to reduce alcohol misuse. However, it is important for any additional action to be taken in the right context and in recent years there has been a decline in overall consumption and more importantly, a number of trends indicating levels of harmful drinking and the effects of harmful consumption also show a decline. Key trends include:

- Overall alcohol consumption in the UK (15+) down 19% since the peak in 2004 and is down 9% since 2000.
- The percentage of frequent drinkers in fell between 2005-2012. For men, the figure dropped from 22% to 14% and for women, from 13% to 9%. (Great Britain)
- The percentage of those drinking over the recommended guidelines on their heaviest drinking day also fell from 2005-2012. For men this dropped from 41% to 34% and for women from 34% to 26%. (Great Britain)
- The proportion of young people in England (11-15 year olds) that have tried alcohol fell from 59% in 2000 to 39% in 2013.
- As a proportion of total hospital admissions, alcohol-related admissions have remained broadly flat since 2004 at around 1.3% of total admissions. (Public Health England caution against highlighting definite trends in admissions data due to changes in admissions coding methodology). (England)
- In Great Britain, drink driving casualties fell by 45% between 2000 and 2012.
- Alcohol related crime in England and Wales has fallen by 26% since 2001 (British Crime Survey)
- Since 2000, in England and Wales there has been a 28% reduction in drink driving convictions.

Whilst we do not intend to minimise problems that remain it is important that policies pursued are targeted and proportionate and do not unduly penalise responsible drinkers or place unnecessary burdens on business.

We would therefore suggest that the Welsh Government, alongside the UK Government, continue to prioritise a targeted approach to tackling alcohol and substance misuse. Alongside partnership working which has proved so successful through the Public Health Responsibility Deal consideration should be given to further support for low alcohol drinks such as beer through the duty regime. Pubs are of importance to local communities and provide a space where alcohol is consumed in a managed, social environment therefore further support in reducing the regulatory and taxation burden on the sector would be welcomed. We have previously set out where we believe further action is required.¹

¹ BBPA Responsibility Statement <http://www.beerandpub.com/industry-briefings/bbpa-responsibility-statement>

We welcome the chance to be able to submit information to the committee and would be very happy to discuss any of this further.

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