



Association of Directors of Public Health (UK)

## The Association of Directors of Public Health Statement on the Government's Responsibility Deal

### Call for action on minimum unit price for alcohol and standardised packaging of tobacco products

The Association of Directors of Public Health has expressed its strong disappointment and concern over the Government's recent announcements that it will not move forward with action on the introduction of a minimum unit price for alcohol and standardised packaging of tobacco products.

In light of these decisions, and concerns that the Government is seemingly allowing vested interests to adversely influence policies intended to improve the public's health, the ADPH Executive has considered its position with regard to involvement with the Responsibility Deal – and has concluded that the Association of Directors of Public Health should withdraw from involvement with the Responsibility Deal in its entirety.

ADPH President Dr Janet Atherton said ***“we are very disappointed that the Government has failed to move forward with the introduction of minimum unit pricing for alcohol and standardised packaging of tobacco products. Both standardised packaging and minimum unit pricing (MUP) are evidence-based interventions that will, individually and together, reduce the burden of premature death and disability and reduce health inequalities – particularly in the most deprived communities.***

***These measures will primarily protect the future health of children. Action is needed now to reduce the harm to children from tobacco and the effects of alcohol over-consumption – over 200,000 children in the UK take up smoking each year, and those in our most deprived communities suffer the consequences of cheap alcohol through alcohol-related crime, violence and the development of alcohol-related health problems in younger people.***

***We commend the approach being taken by the Scottish Government, which has listened to its advisors and intends to pursue measures – such as minimum unit pricing for alcohol and standardised packaging for tobacco products - that will contribute to reducing alcohol and tobacco related harm and improve public health in Scotland.***

***We would call on the Governments in England, Northern Ireland and Wales to follow suit and move ahead with minimum unit pricing for alcohol and standardised packaging for tobacco products.”***

Dr Atherton confirmed that ADPH Executive members had concluded that it was no longer tenable for the Association to be involved with the Government's Responsibility Deal, and she confirmed that the Association of Directors of Public Health was:

- withdrawing from involvement with the Responsibility Deal in its entirety;
- calling on the UK Government to take action now to reduce health inequalities and the health and wider societal harm caused by tobacco and cheap alcohol across the UK, by moving ahead with minimum unit pricing for alcohol and standardised packaging for tobacco products.

#### Further information

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through DPH development, sharing good practice, and policy and advocacy programmes. [www.adph.org.uk](http://www.adph.org.uk)

ADPH has a strong track record of collaboration with other stakeholders in public health, including those working within the NHS, local authorities and other sectors.

ADPH has welcomed the Welsh Government's recent expression of concern at the delay in progressing with standardised packaging, and that it is working to consider a way forward.

The Scottish Directors of Public Health Group have welcomed that - having sought advice from and listened to its advisors - the Scottish Government has made announcements that will see minimum unit pricing for alcohol and standardised packaging for tobacco products brought forward; The Scottish DsPH Group have also joined other Public Health organisations in condemning the UK Government's withdrawal of proposals for standardised packaging for tobacco products and minimum unit pricing of alcohol.

The measures we are calling for primarily protect the future health of children. Over 200,000 children in the UK take up smoking each year - standardised packaging will protect children from the marketing devices of the tobacco industry; and introducing a MUP will stop alcohol being sold at pocket money prices - so reducing alcohol-related health problems in younger people, and also reducing alcohol-related crime and violence and its impact on children and young people.

ADPH is a member of the Smokefree Action Coalition – a group of more than 190 organisations - committed to promoting public health and reducing the harm caused by tobacco. <http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/>  
The systematic review of the evidence for plain tobacco packaging, commissioned by the DH and carried out by the Public Health Research Consortium concludes that “there is strong evidence to support the propositions set out in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control relating to the role of plain packaging in helping to reduce smoking rates; that is, that plain packaging would reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products, it would increase the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings and messages, and it would reduce the use of design techniques that may mislead consumers about the harmfulness of tobacco products.” [http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/project\\_2011-2016\\_006.html](http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/project_2011-2016_006.html))

The Association of Directors of Public Health believes that:

- a reduction in alcohol consumption at population level is needed, with UK government strategies, legislation and regulation to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- there should be greater consideration of public health and levels of alcohol-related harm when processing licensing applications;
- national policies should support partnership working to ensure implementation of existing laws on sales of alcohol including to those underage, supported by the introduction of education on alcohol-related issues at a younger age;
- a minimum unit price for alcohol of \*50p (at 2009 prices) is required, with no alcohol sold at less than \*50p per unit (index linked). In a survey conducted by ADPH in December 2009, 83% of Directors of Public Health said that lobbying for a minimum price of \*50p per unit of alcohol was one of their top priorities. [\*It should be noted that due to inflation since the <sup>1</sup>SchARR (University of Sheffield) model in 2009, this figure is now equivalent to 54p];
- detrimental cross border issues may arise if UK-wide action is not taken on a minimum unit price for alcohol;
- the minimum unit price level should be kept under review in relation to changes in the evidence base for alcohol related harm - if evidence shows greater impact at higher prices the unit price should be increased accordingly;
- measures should be developed that narrow the gap between the on-trade and supermarkets/other off-trade;
- the Public Health Outcomes Framework should give more support to outcome-focused delivery in relation to alcohol related harm.

**Association of Directors of Public Health**  
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<sup>1</sup> Meng, Y. et al. (2012) 'Model-based appraisal of alcohol minimum pricing and off-licensed trade discount bans in Scotland using the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model (v.2): Second update based on newly available data' SchARR, University of Sheffield