

“Families and Alcohol – Now and Next”



For North Lanarkshire Alcohol Summit
2 April 2025

Where are we now?

Families & the Three 'Best Buys' to reduce alcohol harm

1. Price

Tory MSP schooled on minimum unit pricing in clash with charity chief

6TH FEBRUARY 2024 ALCOHOL MINIMUM UNIT PRICING SANDESH GULHANE HEALTH



Sandesh Gulhane clashed with charity chief Justina Murray on the impact of minimum unit pricing (Image: Scottish Parliament TV)



By Steph Brawn
Multimedia Political Journalist
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12 Comments

2. Availability

“The most prominent things there is the availability of alcohol – how it is ever present. Not just in alcohol marketing, but in just your everyday life. It’s there, in small shops, in supermarkets. You can’t avoid it. And I think that is one of the biggest problems we have in Scotland – how easy it is to access.”

“I went into Greggs one day and they were doing a Christmas hamper raffle, and they had alcohol in their Christmas hamper for raffling...I was thinking to myself I just nipped into Greggs for a sausage roll and there’s a bottle of champagne sitting on the top of the counter for you to try and win. You’re making it impossible for people to manage in the short-term.”

Families & the Three ‘Best Buys’

contd ...

3. Marketing

“We have heard the noise made by the alcohol industry about the proposals to restrict alcohol marketing. It is not surprising that they will do everything to maintain the status quo.

However we also have a voice and we need to be heard. We do not have the power or influence of the alcohol industry, we do not have an army of lobbyists or a multi-million pound PR machine to amplify our voices. Our daily lives are shaped by chaos, exhaustion, disappointment, grief and loss. We do not have the time, energy or resources to compete with the industry. But you have let our voice be drowned out by those with money, power and influence.

We need you to hear us and to hear our stories. We matter too – our families matter, our communities matter. In the past four years, since the Scottish Government publicly committed to tackling alcohol marketing, over 4,500 more people in Scotland have died directly through alcohol. They include our family members, our friends, our colleagues, our loved ones. How many more people will die, how many more lives shattered, how many more families destroyed before you hear our voice?”



<https://www.sfad.org.uk/families-urge-first-minister-not-to-backtrack-on-alcohol-marketing-pledge>

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2025

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Families Urge First Minister Not To Backtrack On Alcohol Marketing Pledge

Posted on 25th May 2023 by Rebecca Bradley

Family members and friends affected by a loved one's drinking have published an open letter to Humza Yousaf, First Minister, urging him not to backtrack on the Scottish Government's longstanding pledge to tackle alcohol marketing.

137 family members and friends have signed the letter, from the Highlands to Dumfries and Galloway. They express their shock that the First Minister has asked his officials to take long-awaited proposals "back to the drawing board" due to alcohol industry concerns – ignoring the concerns of those most affected.

The Scottish Government announced plans to address alcohol marketing in November 2018, however a consultation on this matter was not published until November 2022, closing in March 2023. On 18 April 2023, the First Minister announced "a fresh look at this issue" following active lobbying by the alcohol industry.

Thursday May 25, 2023

A SCOTTISH PERSPECTIVE

News 7

Campaigners demand action on alcohol advertising ban U-turn

Ena Sabljak

CAMPAIGNERS have questioned if Humza Yousaf is in the "pocket of the alcohol industry" after a consultation on curbing drink advertising was unexpectedly tabled. More than 100 families and friends affected by a loved one's drinking have signed a letter urging the First Minister to not backtrack on a longstanding pledge to tackle alcohol marketing. Mr Yousaf announced that he told officials to take proposals "back to the drawing board" during a policy statement in Holyrood on April 18. Charities Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs (SFAAD) was "shocked" by the announcement and felt "left in the dark" over the development after participating in the consultation. Chief executive Justina Murray told The Herald: "Families are already powerless and excluded and it just seems to be offensive to them to then yet again have their voice taken away. They don't have that power, wealth or influence of the alcohol industry." It means further delay despite four and half years passing since the Scottish Government first committed to looking at alcohol marketing in November 2018. The long-awaited consultation was not started until November of last year and closed just a month before Mr Yousaf announced "a fresh look at this issue". During this time, more than 4,500 people have died directly through alcohol use, the letter to Mr Yousaf emphasises. It reads: "They include our family members, our friends, our colleagues, our loved ones. How many more people will die, how many more lives shattered, how many more families destroyed before you hear our voice?" There were 1,245 deaths caused directly by alcohol consumption in 2021 alone, the highest number since 2008. Campaigners and charities, including SFAAD, were also told nothing of what will happen to the consultation



Justina Murray, left, with Rebekah, who was affected by someone else's alcohol use

Pictures: Colin Means

they participated in. "I was really shocked, and I was also surprised we hadn't heard directly," Ms Murray said. "We participated in the consultation so you would think if there was any follow-up to that that they would contact the people who took part. The first we heard of it was when another organisation shared the speech with us. We just felt in the moment, are you really throwing families under the bus here in the rush to improve your relationship with business?" The letter that was delivered to the First Minister on Tuesday was signed by 137 family members and friends who live every day with the impact of alcohol use, including through active alcohol use and the loss of loved ones.

It emphasised that alcohol marketing frequently aims to encourage over-consumption, with industry profits relying on people drinking too much, too often. The signatories stated: "However we also have a voice, and we need to be heard. We do not have the power or influence of the alcohol industry, we do not have an army of lobbyists or a multi-million pound PR machine to amplify our voices. Our daily lives are shaped by chaos, exhaustion, disappointment, grief and loss. We do not have the time, energy or resources to compete with the industry. But you have let our voice be drowned out by those with money, power and influence." Scotland had already taken on

“It seems that the First Minister has gone into the pocket of the alcohol industry

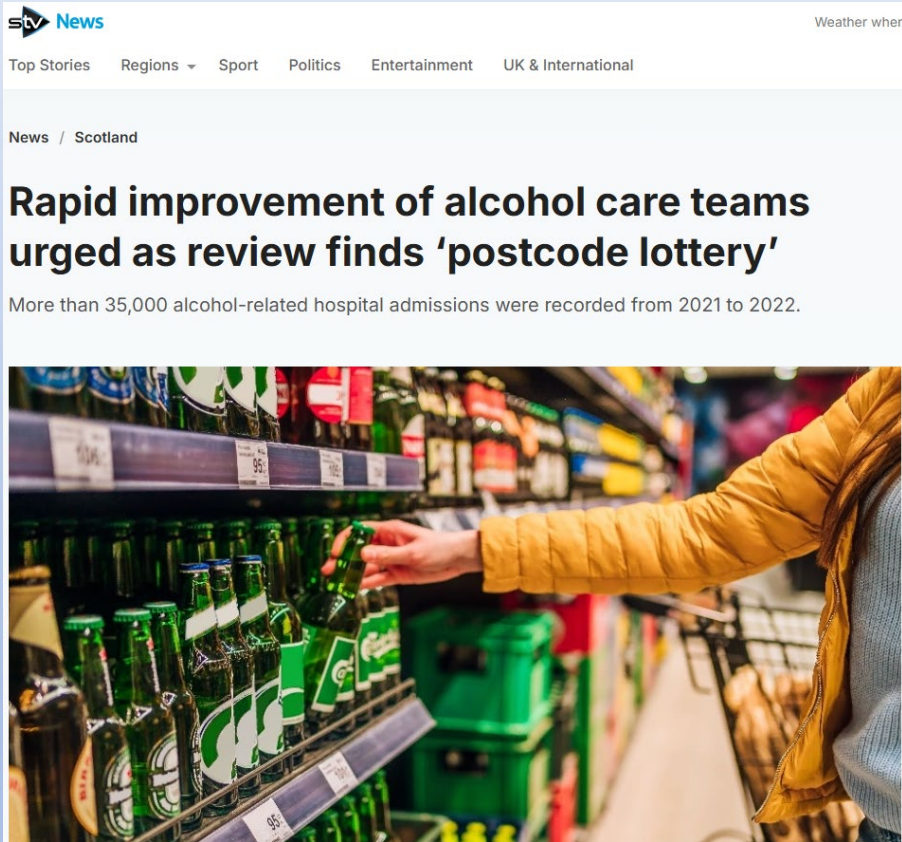
another of these "best buys" through the introduction of minimum unit pricing. Ms Murray added that measures such as the minimum unit pricing made the country a "world leader in terms of alcohol policy" ahead of the dropped consultation. She said: "Now it seems that the First Minister has gone into the pocket of the alcohol industry." Drugs and Alcohol Policy Minister Elena Whitham said: "My deepest sympathy goes to all those affected by the loss of a loved one through alcohol. We're determined to do all we can to reduce alcohol-related harm – that's why we have introduced and champion initiatives such as our world leading Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP)."

'More needs to be done over ads'

A MOTHER of two has said she is "scared" of the day her children start drinking amid omnipresent alcohol advertising in Scotland. Rebekah, 31, opened up about how her family's life has been seriously impacted by her ex-husband's binge drinking. She is one of many examples of families affected by the alcohol use of their loved ones. "It feels like it comes out of nowhere and throws up everything in the air," Rebekah told the Herald. "It creates this big, huge chaos in our lives. The kids are a bit older now and they are seeing a lot more of it. It amounts to me having to pick up the pieces, talk to them about alcohol, what that can do to you and how it has affected their dad." The 31-year-old added: "As they get older, it has become harder to hide it from them which is kind of what I have done the rest of the time. After a pledge was made by the Scottish Government in 2018, a consultation which could curb alcohol advertising was welcomed by campaigners. But it was dismissed and officials were ordered "back to the drawing board". "It's literally everywhere," Rebekah said about alcohol and related advertising in Scotland. "More needs to be done in regards to the marketing and availability of alcohol especially for younger and impressionable people. I am scared for when my kids grow up and they are entering that period of their life and they start drinking."

Where are we now (contd ...)?

Families and Alcohol Treatment, Care and Support



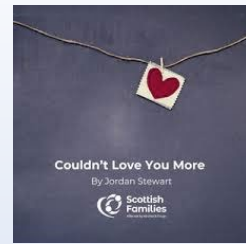
“Unfortunately, this survey shows that in Scotland whether that opportunity is grasped is a classic ‘post code lottery’ with alcohol services in hospitals revealed to vary from suboptimal to non-existent and with no consistent approach to funding or practice.”

(Alastair MacGilchrist, Chair, SHAAP, Feb 2024, emphasis added)



How does this feel for families?

Stories of Love and Loss



“I lost my mum because of **alcohol**...I love my mum because she was kind, caring and **my safety blanket**. I feel lost without her, but I do have cherished memories with her.”

“I lost my daughter because of **alcohol** addiction...I love my daughter because she was such good fun and had **the most infectious laugh**. She was also the most compassionate and loving person. Everyone who met her fell in love with her.”

“I lost my sister-in-law because of **alcohol**...I love my family because of their honesty, **sense of humour** and openness to being themselves.”

“I lost my mum because of **alcohol-related liver disease**...I love my family because when I look at them, I want to take their hurt away. They miss her every single minute of every single day. I wish I could do something for them to help, I just on **loving them the hardest I can**.”

“I lost my dad because of **alcohol dependence**...I love my dad because he was **an amazing father and man**. Alcohol did not define him or change his love for me and my sister. He was strong, supportive and loving to us always.”

“I lost my brother because of **alcohol addiction**...I love my brother because of his kindness, generosity, compassion and great sense of injustice in the world and a **desire to make things better for everyone**.”

“I lost my dad because of **alcohol**...I love my dad because **he helped** to create my wonderful and loving family.”







What do families want to happen next?



AND ...

**ACTIONS NOT
WORDS on:**

- ✓ Pricing
- ✓ Availability
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Treatment, care and Support

Families are more aware of rights 	Families are empowered to use their rights 	Families understand loved ones' rights 
Families have the ability to advocate for themselves 	Rights feel real for families on the ground 	Services uphold families' rights. 

Thank you and keep in touch!

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