

Dear Health, Social Care and Sport Committee,

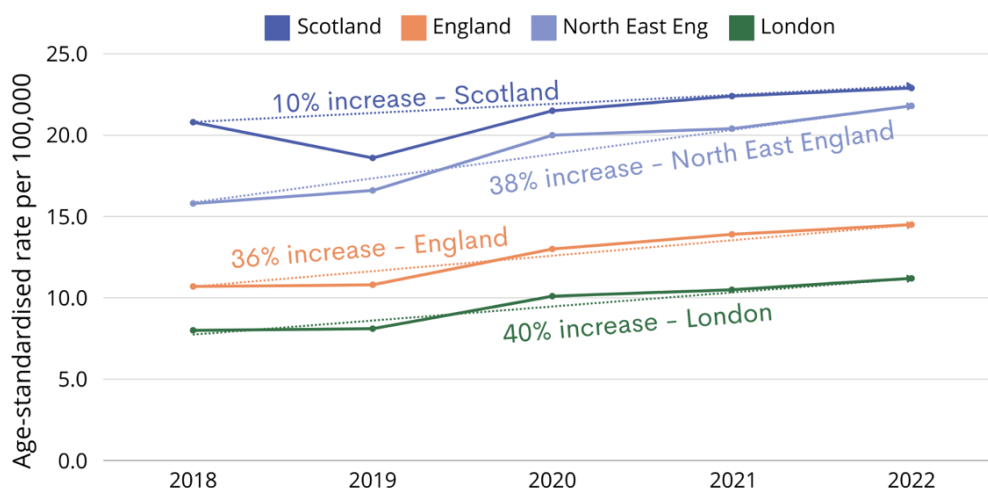
We are writing to you to voice our support for the continuation of minimum unit pricing (MUP) of alcohol and its uprating to 65p per unit.

Scotland has led the world in many aspects of alcohol policy, with MUP being a bold move which other countries and states have already begun to adapt and implement themselves. For many, the success of MUP is clear vindication that public health can succeed over commercial interest and the Scottish Government should take real pride in what it has achieved. The public health community is united in believing that now is the time for this momentum to continue, particularly during a time of current Westminster inertia.

We write to you only two weeks after the Chancellor of the Exchequer once again froze alcohol duty rates. This will allow alcohol to become even more affordable across the UK, which has been a direct contributor to increases in alcohol-related ill health, disease, and death. At a time of record high deaths from alcohol, it is crucial that Scotland continues to lead the way by uprating to 65p.

As the Sheffield Alcohol Research Group has highlighted, the 50p level of MUP has been significantly eroded by inflation, meaning it is now worth the equivalent of 41p. Alcohol consumption is 2.2% higher in Scotland compared to if the level of MUP had risen by inflation each year. It is therefore vital that it is uprated to 65p, and consideration should be given to how inflation will continue to erode MUP if it isn't consistently uprated.

During the years in which MUP has been implemented, every region of the UK has seen an increase in alcohol-specific deaths, due to the change in drinking patterns during the pandemic. However, this increase has been far higher in every single English region. The alcohol-specific death rate in London increased by 40% from 2018-2022. Yorkshire has seen the highest increase at 49.6%. Even the region with the lowest increase – the South West – has seen a 16.8% increase, higher than Scotland's. MUP is one of the main contributors to this ever-narrowing gap in the death rate from alcohol since 2018.



Source: National Records of Scotland - Alcohol-specific deaths 2022; OHID Alcohol Profiles for England 2022

**Advisory Council**

Chair: Dr Peter Rice; Vice-chair: Dr Janet Tollington; Chief executive: Dr Katherine Severi  
Crispin Action, Professor Jeff Collin, Dr Philip M Hadfield, Professor Gerard Hastings, Professor David Jernigan,  
Professor Petra Meier, Professor Jonathan Shepherd CBE, Dr Gillian W Shorter  
Secretary to the board: Paul Whitaker

Some have argued that the events of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis mean that MUP should not be continued, or at least should not be uprated to 65p. However, this is precisely the time when both need to happen, as MUP has been shown to reduce deaths particularly in the most deprived areas, reducing health inequalities.

We reiterate our commendation of the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland in *The Lancet* last September, where we highlighted the high quality of the evaluation. As we wrote then, there are several hundred people with low incomes in Scotland who would have died as a result of alcohol, who are alive today as a result of minimum unit pricing.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Peter M Rice".

Dr Peter Rice  
Chair, Institute of Alcohol Studies

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Severi".

Dr Katherine Severi  
Chief Executive, Institute of Alcohol Studies