



A planned law to ban promotions for cheap alcohol in Scotland could be put into action as soon as next year, but should England follow suit?

Last year Scotland's bid to pass a minimum price law on alcohol failed because the SNP Government, who led the bid, could not get enough support. But now the Government has a majority in the Scottish Parliament the proposed bill could become a law by next year.

It has been estimated that Scotland's alcohol problem costs £3.5bn a year, on average £900 per adult. A minimum pricing scheme could mean a huge drop in alcohol consumption.

But Scotland is not the over place where alcohol consumption is reaching worrying levels; in the last five years the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle and the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven has seen an 11% increase in the number of people being treated for alcohol related causes.

“A minimum price per alcohol unit of 50p in England would mean an end to cheap alcohol in supermarkets and would mean the minimum price of a pint would be around £1.25,” Professor John Ashton, director of public health for NHS Cumbria, told The News and Star newspaper.

This would affect very few pubs and those people who chose to drink sensibly and responsibly.” he continued.

For the proposed law to work England and Scotland would both have to introduce a minimum price on alcohol otherwise places like Cumbria could become a ‘booze cruise’ destination for Scots crossing the border to fill up with cut-price alcohol.

“The area could see an influx of Scots looking for cheap booze in supermarkets and off-licences to drink before a night out,” warns Ashton.

“This could have a detrimental effect on quality of life for ordinary people as well as a further drain on local health services unless we all act together as a United Kingdom.

“Legislation is not the only answer. The alcohol industry itself must take responsibility and this includes off-licences and supermarkets, not just licensed premises.

“The best way to tackle the harm and social effects caused by alcohol is to make it less easily available and a minimum price for a unit of alcohol is a step towards achieving this.” He said.

Many experts believe that whilst the minimum pricing on alcohol is a step in the right direction it doesn’t get to the root cause of the problem.

“If you’re dependent on alcohol and the price increases then you’ll just drop something else from your budget so you can afford to buy alcohol,” Says Paul Brown, director of Cumbria

Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service (CADAS).

He believes that the drinking culture in the UK as a whole is the key cause to the increase in alcohol consumption over the years

“A good test is to ask young people if they can go out on Friday night and not drink,” he explains.

“Most say yes but then when you ask them if they can do this for three weeks without drinking, most will not want to do it.

“We associate drinking with having a good time. People drink at home before they go out. It’s so ingrained in our culture. We need a huge cultural change.” He said.

Source: [News and Star](#)