



# The evaluation of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for alcohol: Summary

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## **What is MUP?**

Minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol was introduced by the Scottish Government as part of a wider ranging package of policies to reduce the high levels of harm caused by alcohol in Scotland. MUP means there is a minimum price for a unit of alcohol, below which alcohol cannot be sold in licensed premises in Scotland. It is intended to benefit those at most risk of harm by targeting high-strength low-cost alcohol. The minimum legal price for a product is linked to how much alcohol is in it. MUP was introduced on 1 May 2018 at 50 pence per unit of alcohol.

## **Why is it being evaluated?**

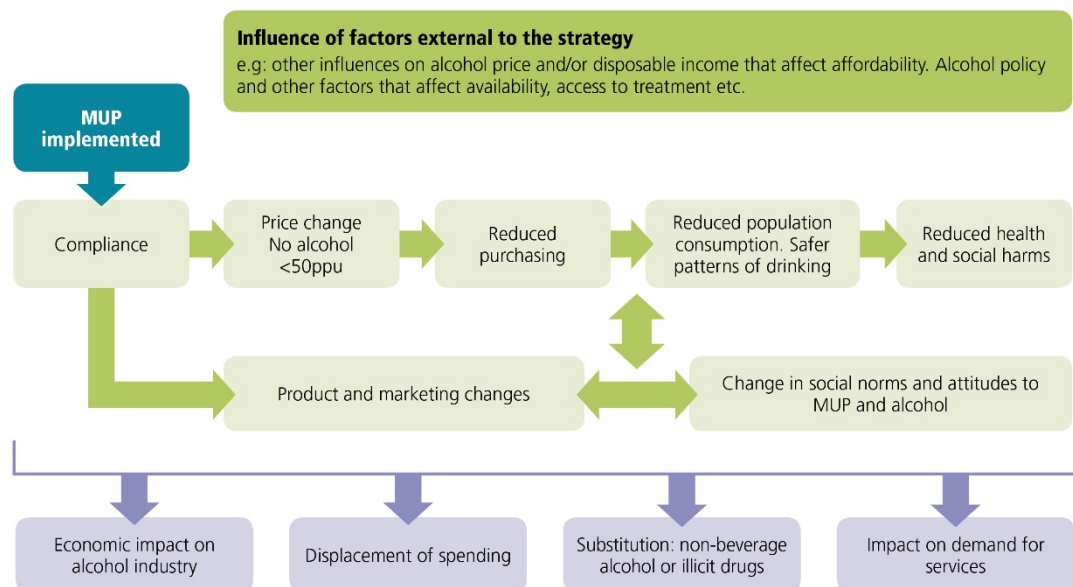
The form of minimum pricing we have in Scotland has not been tried anywhere else before. So it's important that we gather evidence of its impacts in Scotland through a robust and comprehensive evaluation that provides evidence of what difference it is making and to whom. NHS Health Scotland have been asked to lead the independent evaluation of MUP as part of the Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy (MESAS) work. This evaluation will form the basis of a report for the Scottish Parliament, to inform the vote to decide if it should continue beyond April 2024. Over the next 5 years we will work to understand the impact MUP has had on the level of alcohol-related harm in Scotland and the extent to which some people and businesses are positively or negatively impacted more than others.

## **How will we find out what effect MUP has?**

We have looked at the evidence about what effects MUP is expected to have, and listened to the views of stakeholders about what they think might happen. From this we have developed a 'Theory of Change' (Figure 1) that shows how it is expected MUP will increase the price of alcohol, reduce alcohol consumption and ultimately reduce the harm caused by alcohol. The alcohol products available, and how those products are marketed, may change as a result of MUP. Changes in price, products, marketing, consumption and harm

may help drive changes in attitudes to alcohol and MUP, and vice versa. The Theory of Change recognises that a range of factors other than MUP can affect the price of alcohol, how much alcohol people drink and how much harm is caused by alcohol. For example, changes in people’s income, in living costs and in funding to key public services. Where possible, we will explore these to help us understand whether any changes in the outcome areas we see are due to MUP or other factors.

**Figure 1: Theory of change for minimum unit pricing for alcohol**



To evidence the Theory of Change, our evaluation will gather evidence in four outcome areas:

- How MUP is implemented and complied with.
- The impact MUP has on the alcoholic drinks industry.
- The impact MUP has on how much alcohol is consumed.
- Changes in alcohol health and social harms.

## **What studies are in the evaluation of MUP?**

The evidence for the evaluation will come from a portfolio of evaluation studies. Some of these studies are part of the MESAS-funded work. Others are separately funded, for example by research grant funders. The portfolio will assess not only the expected impacts of MUP on alcohol price, consumption and related harm, but also explore other potential consequences like how it affects alcoholic drink producers and retailers, and whether or not some people find another source of alcohol unaffected by MUP, or switch to other drugs.

The evaluation will track how things change over time and where possible compare what's happening in Scotland to other places that don't have MUP. This will help us to be more certain that the changes we see are due to MUP. For example, our confidence that MUP has had a positive impact on health will increase if there are bigger falls in Scotland than elsewhere in:

- the amount of low-cost, high-strength alcohol available
- the amount of alcohol consumed
- the number of people admitted to hospital due to alcohol
- the number of deaths reported to be caused by alcohol.

We will use a wide range of evidence to get a complete picture of the changes that happen after MUP is introduced, how those changes happen and the experiences of people affected by MUP. This will include information that is regularly collected and some information that we are collecting specifically for the evaluation.

We will use data from shops to explore the effects of MUP on the price of alcohol, the range of alcohol products available and the amount of alcohol sold. We will also use information from surveys asking people how much they drink to track changes in alcohol consumption. To understand the impact

MUP has on the alcohol market we will be collecting information from a range of businesses, including small corner shops and larger businesses who produce or sell alcoholic drinks.

We will also explore how different groups respond to MUP. People who drink at harmful levels are more likely to have poor health and experience other harms from alcohol. These people have the most potential to benefit from MUP but also may find any increase in price difficult to cope with. It is important we understand how harmful drinkers respond to MUP in terms of their drinking and related behaviour. We will gather information through surveys and interviews with people using and working in alcohol treatment services to explore the impact of MUP on these people and their families. Young people under the age of 18 will be asked about any changes they have made as a result of MUP. Government, police and health information will be used to track changes in the health and social harms caused by alcohol over time. Where possible, we will look for any differences between age groups, men and women, and levels of income. Finally, we will involve the public and those from alcohol treatment services, the voluntary sector and the alcohol industry throughout the course of the evaluation.

## **How are we ensuring the quality of the evaluation?**

It is important that our evaluation is recognised to be robust, impartial and credible. To make sure of this we have set up a governance structure to oversee the design and delivery of the evaluation portfolio and component studies undertaken or commissioned by us. The MESAS Governance Board ensures that the portfolio is comprehensive, robust and takes account of a wide range of perspectives. Evaluation Advisory Groups (EAGs) advise on individual or groups of related studies. Representatives from the NHS, the police, local government, academia, the alcohol industry and the third sector are involved in relevant EAGs.

# When will we know what the effect of MUP has been?

We will report findings from individual studies when we have them. The final report will bring together all the findings from the MESAS and separately funded studies and be published at the end of 2023. The table below shows all the studies that are part of the evaluation and when they are expected to report.

## MESAS FUNDED STUDIES

Mid 2019	Early 2020	Early 2021	Early 2022	Early 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance (Published)</li> <li>Monitoring report (June) (Published)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people: own drinking and related behaviour (Published)</li> <li>Sales based consumption: 12 months post MUP (Descriptive analysis) (Published)</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospital admissions and deaths</li> </ul>
Late 2019	Mid 2020	Mid 2021	Mid 2022	Mid 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic impact on the alcoholic drinks industry: Short-term impacts (Published)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people: harm from others (published)</li> <li>Small retailers (published)</li> <li>Monitoring report (June) (Published)</li> <li>Sales based consumption: 12 months post MUP (Statistical analysis) (Published)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price distribution</li> <li>Monitoring report (June)</li> <li>Drinking at harmful levels: short term impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sales based consumption (Final report)</li> <li>Monitoring report (June)</li> <li>Drinking at harmful levels (Final report)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring report (June)</li> </ul>
	Late 2020	Late 2021	Late 2022	Late 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public attitudes to MUP (Published)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcohol products and prices</li> <li>Crime and disorder, public safety and public nuisance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic impact on the alcoholic drinks industry (Final report)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final report (covering both MESAS and separately funded studies)</li> </ul>

## SEPARATELY FUNDED STUDIES

Mid 2020	Mid 2021	Mid 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily survey (N of 1) (Published)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household expenditure</li> </ul>
Late 2021		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambulance call-outs</li> <li>Self-reported consumption</li> <li>Homeless drinkers</li> <li>Consumption and health service impacts</li> </ul>	

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