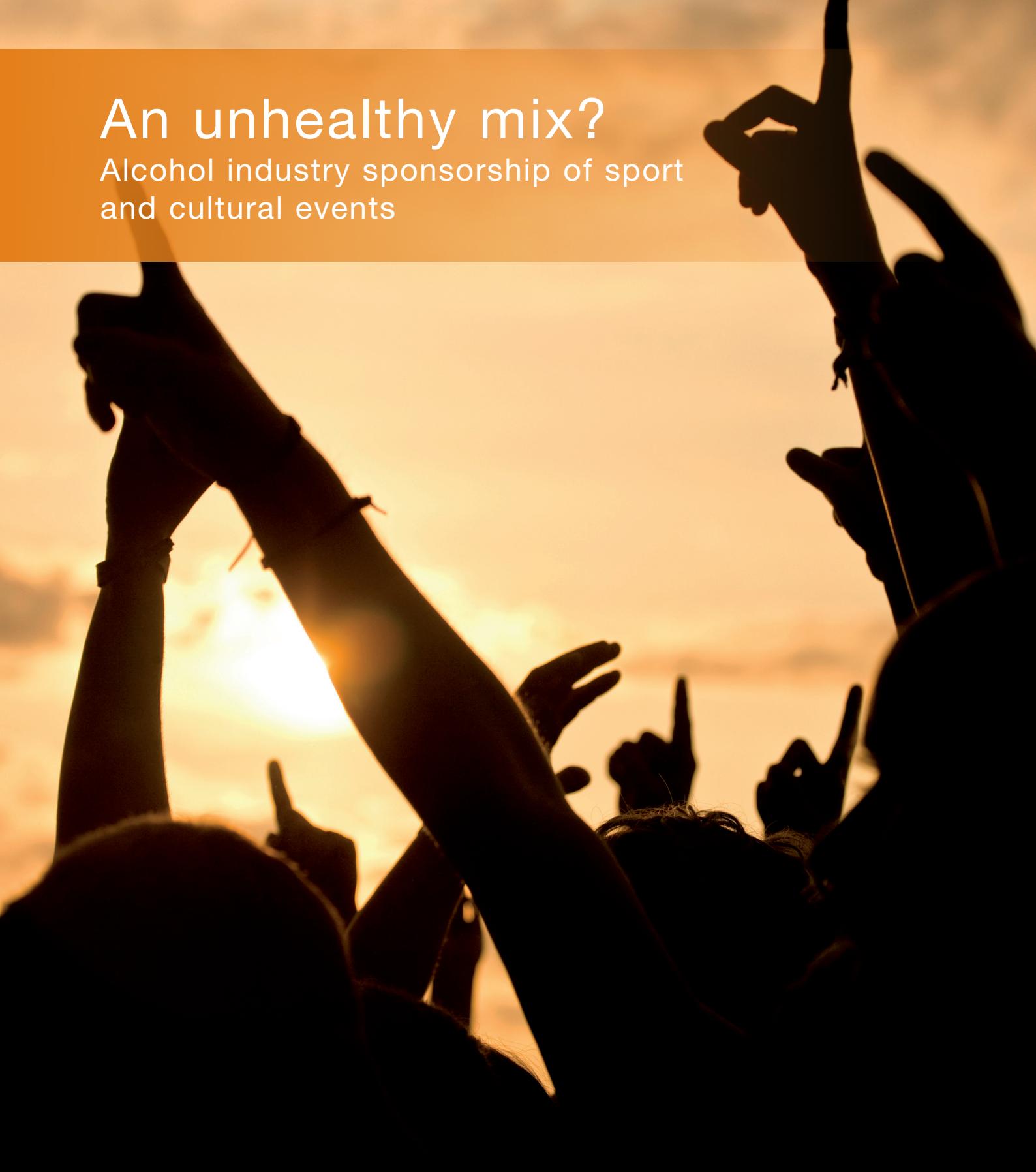


An unhealthy mix?

Alcohol industry sponsorship of sport and cultural events



Alcohol Concern
Making Sense of Alcohol



Alcohol Concern

Alcohol Concern is the national agency on alcohol misuse campaigning for effective alcohol policy and improved services for people whose lives are affected by alcohol-related problems.

Our work in Wales

Alcohol Concern opened its office in Cardiff in 2009. Alcohol Concern Cymru is focusing on policy and public health in Wales, acting as a champion for alcohol harm reduction.

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Executive summary



Sponsorship of sporting and cultural events by the alcohol industry is common practice in Wales, and there is an ongoing debate between the industry and public health groups about the appropriateness of linking such events with the promotion of alcohol.

Like advertising and other forms of marketing, sponsorship gives alcohol companies a platform to develop positive associations with their products. There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that exposure to alcohol promotion is related to increased levels of consumption, and influences drinking intentions and our perceptions of what we consider to be normal drinking behaviours.

Moreover, by their very nature, sporting events such as football and rugby matches, and cultural events such as music concerts, typically have huge appeal to young people. Sponsorship of these events by alcohol companies helps to send the message that alcohol consumption is normal, and indeed necessary to fully enjoy them. This is especially worrying given that young people are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of alcohol.

Alcohol Concern Cymru's own focus group study, undertaken at Coleg Menai in Bangor in October 2010, found that young people's awareness of alcohol sponsorship is high, but that they are often unconcerned about the ethics of alcohol sponsorship, and so exposed to it that they consider it a normal part of the sporting and cultural scene. This was particularly true in the case of sports sponsorship by the drinks industry.

Alcohol Concern argues that sponsorship and other forms of alcohol promotion and marketing normalise and, in many cases, glamorise the use of a damaging substance, and that tighter restrictions are urgently required to address increasingly harmful levels of alcohol consumption in Wales.

Although a total ban on all forms of alcohol marketing and advertising may seem an obvious solution in order to protect children and young people, there is insufficient evidence to support this approach at this time. However, the regulations set out in the French Loi Évin legislation provide an example of robust methods that could be adopted in Wales and the rest of the UK. Drawing on this example, Alcohol Concern makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

No alcohol sponsorship of cultural or sporting events should be permitted.

Recommendation 2

No alcohol advertising and/or sponsorship should be allowed:

- on television and radio where more than 10% of viewers or listeners are under 18;
- in cinemas showing films with a lower than 18 certificate;
- in non-broadcast media (for example newspapers, posters, magazines) where under-18s make up more than 10% of the readership;
- on the internet.

Recommendation 3

Where alcohol advertising and/or sponsorship is allowed, messages and images should refer only to the qualities of the products such as ABV, origin, composition, means of production and patterns of consumption, and must be accompanied by a government health message comprising at least one-sixth of air time or print space.



Recommendation 4

Given that self-regulatory alcohol industry advertising codes have failed to protect young people, regulation should be made independent of the alcohol and advertising industries. In the longer-term, this regulation should be standardized across the European Union to reflect the alcohol industry's international operations.

Recommendation 5

Pricing policies likely to encourage consumption, particularly amongst young people, should be prohibited. This will be best achieved through the introduction of a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol, in line with the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer for Wales. Given the current lack of progress in establishing a minimum price per unit across England and Wales, Alcohol Concern supports moves to devolve the necessary powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

Introduction



Alcohol is big business in the UK, estimated to be worth in excess of £41.6 billion a year, with more than £800 million spent each year on alcohol marketing.¹ Sponsorships by the alcohol industry form a significant part of marketing and promotion practices,² and the House of Commons Health Select Committee has reported that drinks companies were the second largest source of sponsorship funding in the UK between 2003 and 2006.³

Such sponsorships are commonplace in Wales (see page 8) and include sports events such as football, rugby and cricket, and cultural and arts events such as concerts and music festivals. These often appeal directly to young people, and when televised may amount to the same effect as direct advertising on television.⁴ Major brewer Carling has defined the purpose of its music sponsorship as to “build the image of the brand and recruit young male drinkers.”⁵

Yet we know that young people are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of alcohol. In particular, it can be hazardous to health, potentially damaging the developing brain and body, as well as increasing the risks of injuries, regretted sexual activity, and other substance misuse.⁶ Consequently, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales has advised that children under the age of 15 should not drink any alcohol.⁷

It is now widely accepted that Wales has one of the most serious problems of alcohol misuse amongst young people in Europe. A survey examining the health behaviours of school-aged children in forty countries across Europe in 2005-06⁸ found that Wales had the third highest percentage of 13 year-old girls drinking alcohol at least once a week, and the fourth highest amongst 13 year-old boys. Since 1990, the amount of alcohol consumed by 11 to 15 year-olds has doubled.⁹ Moreover, concern has been

expressed regarding the increasing prominence of binge-drinking as a feature of student life in Wales.¹⁰

Children and young people in Wales are being continually exposed to alcohol marketing. Alcohol Concern recently highlighted the high volume of alcohol advertising on television during the 2010 football World Cup, with over a million children in the UK aged between four and fifteen being exposed to adverts from brands such as Stella Artois, Magners and Fosters.¹¹ Many of our sporting and cultural events in Wales are sponsored by the alcohol industry, and a growing body of research shows a clear association between awareness of and exposure to alcohol marketing, and drinking behaviours and attitudes to drinking.^{12 13 14} The World Health Organisation recommends restrictions on alcohol sponsorship, particularly in order to protect children and young people from such exposure,¹⁵ whilst the British Medical Association has called for a complete ban on all alcohol advertising and sponsorship.¹⁶

“All children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and, to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages.”

WHO’s European Charter on Alcohol (1995)¹⁷

This report examines the issue of alcohol sponsorship in Wales, with particular consideration of its impact on young people. It is intended to stimulate and inform a greater public debate, and makes a number of recommendations for action.

What is sponsorship?



"With tobacco sponsorship now banned in the UK and recent restrictions on junk food advertising, alcohol marketers are becoming increasingly concerned about the future of their sponsorships, especially against the background of rising public concern about the extent of underage drinking."

Dr. Fiona Davies (2009)¹⁸

Sponsorship has been defined as “a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property”.¹⁹ In other words, it is when a company associates its name, brand or related activities with a particular organisation or event, for which the company pays for the right of association for a specified period in order to promote its interests.²⁰ The intended result is that sponsorship creates, in the minds of consumers, a link between the company brand and an event or organisation that target consumers value highly,²¹ a process known as ‘brand transfer’.²²

In one sense, sponsorship operates differently from conventional advertising, in that it is a means of persuasion that is indirect and implicit, allowing a sponsor to intimately communicate with its target audience without being overly intrusive,²³ compared to advertisement messages that are more direct and explicit.²⁴ For this reason, sponsorship is often more accepted by the public and builds goodwill.²⁵ However, the goals of sponsorship and conventional advertising are similar, as they are both used to create and reinforce awareness of, and promote positive messages about, the company and/or product.

“... the expectation (of sponsorship) is that the favourable emotions and images which consumers have of the event itself transfer to the sponsoring brand, creating an unthinking association in consumers’ minds between the event and the brand, positive attitudes, and emotional connections. Because of the social setting and enjoyable shared experience, consumers are assumed to be more involved and more receptive than they might be to more overt forms of marketing.”

Prof. Gerard Hastings (2010)²⁶

Research by O’Brien and Kyri²⁷ has shown specifically how alcohol sponsorship and alcohol advertising may produce similar results, namely an increased association with hazardous drinking. They are typically used in conjunction with one another in order to maximise benefit from each activity. Products such as alcohol and tobacco have limited access to traditional advertising outlets because they are constrained, to varying degrees, by legislation, and as a result the importance of sponsorship and associated activities, such as event signage, is increased.²⁸

There are two main types of alcohol sponsorship, namely ‘event sponsorships’ and ‘organisation sponsorships’. Event sponsorships concern specific events, usually annual, such as sports competitions and music festivals. The sponsorship normally takes the form of cash and product, and may also include ‘porage rights’, which gives the alcohol company exclusive rights to sell their product at the venue.²⁹ Typically, it will incorporate ‘field’ sponsorship, i.e. the placement of a logo or other branding on billboards and signage at the scene of the event, and ‘television broadcast sponsorship’, which occurs when the broadcasting of the event is paid for by a sponsoring company.³⁰ Alcohol companies also sponsor organisations, particularly sports bodies. This normally takes the form of cash, and the recipients use this money to fund their activities, including promotional events.³¹



Box 1: Examples of alcohol industry sponsorship deals in Wales

Brand	Sponsorship deal
Brains	Sponsor of Welsh Rugby Union (2004 onwards); Football Association of Wales, 'official beer of Welsh football' (2005 onwards); 'official ale' of the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff; sponsor of Glamorgan Cricket Club (2001 onwards) including 'official beer'
Carling	'Official beer' of Swansea City Football Club (ongoing). Also sponsor of the 2011 Home Nations football tournament, the Carling Nations Cup
Carlsberg	Sponsor of Llanelli AFC
Diageo	Sponsor of the Celtic Manor Wales Open golf tournament, Newport (2010)
Diageo (Guinness)	Sponsorship of autumn rugby internationals series, in association with English, Scottish and Welsh Rugby Unions (2010)
Fuller Smith & Turner plc	Fullers Organic Honey Dew beer, sponsor of the Hay Literary Festival, Powys (2010)
Heineken	Sponsors of Heineken European Cup Final, Millennium Stadium, Cardiff (2011)
Jägermeister	Partner of Wakestock, Europe's largest wakeboard music festival, Llŷn Peninsula, north Wales (2010)
Magners Irish Cider	Sponsor of Magners League, rugby union (2006 onwards)
Rhymney Brewery	Sponsor of Abertillery Blues Festival (2010)
Tuborg	Friend of Beach Break Live student festival, Pembrey, Carmarthenshire (2010)
Worthington's	'Official beer' of Ospreys rugby (ongoing)

Source: Internet search undertaken by Alcohol Concern June and November 2010, and January 2011

Regulation in the UK



There are a number of sets of rules that govern the promotion and marketing of alcoholic drinks in Wales and the rest of the UK, depending on the media in question. The situation is complex, with each medium governed by a different regulatory body, and with a mix of statutory regulation, co-regulation and self-regulation.

1. The Portman Group's Code of Practice

The Portman Group is a trade group that was established in 1989 by the UK's leading drinks producers with specific objectives to promote sensible drinking, to help prevent alcohol misuse and foster a balanced understanding of alcohol-related issues. More recently, it has taken on the role of encouraging responsible alcohol marketing.³² Its self-regulatory Code of Practice³³ was first introduced in 1996 and sets the rules for the naming, packaging and promotion of alcoholic drinks. Since 2003 its scope includes a range of promotional devices including websites, press releases and sponsorship. There is currently no statutory obligation for companies to follow this Code.

The Code defines sponsorship as "the terms of an agreement or part of an agreement to support a live sporting or cultural product, event or activity, in return for which the sponsored party agrees to be associated with or promote the sponsor's drink(s)." ³⁴ Under the Code, the rule on the placement of sponsorships is that "those under 18 years of age should not comprise more than 25% of the participants, audience or spectators" of a sponsored event.

Other rules within the Code are also relevant to sponsorship:

- a drink's alcoholic strength or intoxicating effect should not be a dominant theme of communication;
- there must be no association with bravado,

or with violent, dangerous or anti-social behaviour;

- there must be no suggestion of any association with sexual success or that consumption of the drink can lead to social success or popularity;
- alcohol producers are unable to display their company's branding on children's replica sports shirts under sponsorship agreements signed after 1 January 2008.³⁵

2. Television and radio codes

Television and radio advertising is regulated by Ofcom (the Office of Communications), operating under the Communications Act 2003.³⁶ Since 2004, Ofcom has delegated day-to-day responsibility for applying broadcast codes to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Thus there is a co-regulatory partnership between Ofcom and ASA. The ASA is responsible for ensuring advertisements are "legal, decent and truthful"³⁷ by applying advertising codes of the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP).

Television and radio advertising is bound by BCAP's Code of Broadcast Advertising.³⁸ This Code sets out a number of specific rules regarding alcohol advertisements, including for television:

- they must not be likely to appeal strongly to people under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture or showing adolescent or juvenile behaviour
- they must not include a person or character whose example is likely to be followed by those aged under 18 years or who has a strong appeal to those under 18
- they must neither imply that alcohol can contribute to an individual's popularity or confidence nor imply that alcohol can enhance personal qualities

- 
- they must not imply that drinking alcohol is a key component of social success or that refusal is a sign of weakness.

Likewise, for radio advertising of alcohol, the Code includes specific rules that set out to protect younger viewers:

- alcohol advertisements must not be targeted at those aged below 18 years or use treatments likely to be of particular appeal to them
- alcohol advertisements must not include a person or character whose example is likely to be followed by those aged under 18 years, or who has a particular appeal to those aged under 18 years.

3. Non-broadcast codes

Non-broadcast promotion of alcohol, for example via posters, newspapers, magazines and cinema advertisements, is subject to CAP's Non-Broadcast Advertising Standards Code.³⁹ In particular, alcohol marketing communications must:

- be socially responsible and must contain nothing that is likely to lead people to adopt styles of drinking that are unwise. For example, they should not encourage excessive drinking. Care should be taken not to exploit the young, the immature or those who are mentally or socially vulnerable
- not imply that drinking alcohol is a key component of the success of a personal relationship or social event
- not link alcohol with activities or locations in which drinking would be unsafe or unwise
- not be likely to appeal to young people particularly under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture. They should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal particularly

to people under 18 in a way that might encourage the young to drink

- not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear. No medium should be used to advertise alcoholic drinks if more than 25% of its audience is under 18 years of age.

4. TV and radio sponsorship

The standards and investigations of complaints relating to television and radio sponsorship have not been contracted out to BCAP and ASA and therefore remain the responsibility of Ofcom. Ofcom's sponsorship rules are set out in Section 9 of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.⁴⁰ Section 9.3 states that "sponsorship on radio and television must comply with both the advertising content and scheduling rules that apply to the medium." However, there is no explicit reference made to alcohol.



Box 2: Restrictions on sponsorships

A variety of countries worldwide have imposed bans on alcohol industry sponsorship of some events. These include:

- Sporting and cultural events: France
- Sports events: Denmark
- Sports and youth events: Algeria, Costa Rica, Indonesia, India (southern states), Norway and the Russian Federation
- Youth events: Bosnia, Panama, Venezuela and Switzerland. Bans for wine and spirits sponsorships are in place in Croatia and Turkey, and for spirits in Finland and Poland.

A ban on alcohol sponsorship of sports events in Ireland has also recently reported to be imminent, and likely to be implemented over a two to three year period.⁴¹

Source: World Health Organisation (2004)⁴² and Institute of Alcohol Studies (2008)⁴³



Box 3: The French position: the ‘Loi Évin’

Control of alcohol promotion in France does not depend on self-regulation or the goodwill of the drinks industry, but is instead controlled by clear legislation, with significant penalties for infringement. Alcohol sponsorship of sporting and cultural events has been banned in France since the early 1990s, as part of legislation to control the promotion of alcohol and tobacco known as the Loi Évin after the Health Minister at the time, Claude Évin. The legislation was introduced against a background of rising levels of liver disease in France and smoking-related illness and death.

Its main articles relating to alcohol are:

- 1.** No advertising to be targeted at young people
- 2.** No sponsorship of cultural or sports events is permitted
- 3.** No advertising is allowed on television or in cinemas
- 4.** Advertising is permitted only in the press for adults, on radio channels (under precise conditions) and at special events such as wine fairs
- 5.** Where advertising is permitted, a health message must be included on each advertisement, stating that alcohol abuse is dangerous for health.

In 2002, the Loi Évin was challenged in the courts as a restriction on the freedom to provide advertising services and television broadcasting services. The European Court of Justice, however, ruled in favour of the French law, noting that it is in fact undeniable that alcohol advertising acts as an encouragement to consumption and that the French rules are appropriate to ensure their aim of protecting public health.⁴⁴

Encouragingly, there has been a general trend towards reduced alcohol consumption in France in recent years, but it is not currently clear whether, or to what degree, the Loi Évin has contributed to this.⁴⁵ Moreover, despite the relative severity of the legislation, alcohol producers have still managed to evade the ban in certain circumstances. Brains beer, for example, as official sponsor of the Welsh rugby team, replaced its logo on the team jerseys in 2009 when Wales played in France, with the words ‘Try Essai’. ‘Essai’ is the French word for a try in rugby, and when spoken aloud the phrase sounds the same as ‘try SA’, a reference to one of the brewery’s best-known products. Similarly, in 2005, Brains logo was changed to ‘Brawn’, and in 2007 the message read ‘Brawn Again’.⁴⁶

Alcohol marketing and young people



“Young people are a key growth sector for the alcohol industry... Alcohol marketing is likely to be particularly important for young people because of the role that brands play in their lives and because of methods that will be attractive to them, such as new technology or brand sponsorship of rock concerts and hip-hop artists. These marketing strategies reach their young target audience but may be largely invisible to older groups and policymakers, with implications for the appropriateness of current policies intended to protect vulnerable populations.”

Babor, T. et al., 2010⁴⁷

this vulnerability by shaping their attitudes, perceptions and expectancies about alcohol use, which then influence their decision to drink.⁵¹

“Generally, there is a dose-response relationship between young people’s exposure to alcohol marketing and the likelihood that they will start to drink or drink more. The greater the exposure, the greater the impact. The evidence thus suggests that limiting the kind and amount of alcohol marketing would reduce drinking initiation and heavy drinking among young people.”

World Health Organisation, 2009⁵²

Young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol, and to alcohol advertising.⁴⁸ Researchers, however, have found it difficult to prove conclusively that alcohol advertising increases consumption amongst this age group. The reason for this is simple: there is a complex combination of factors that all have the potential, in varying degrees, to encourage and increase youth drinking. For young people who have not started to drink, for instance, expectancies may be influenced by normative assumptions about teenage drinking, as well as through the observation of drinking behaviours of parents and family members, peers, and celebrity figures in the mass media.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, a number of recent studies have clearly demonstrated a relationship between alcohol marketing and youth drinking behaviour. Research also suggests that the earlier young people start to drink and the more they drink at a young age, the more likely they are to suffer alcohol-related harm and to become dependent on alcohol.⁵⁰ Moreover, young people, especially those who are already showing signs of alcohol-related problems, are particularly vulnerable to alcohol marketing; such marketing manipulates

The presence of alcohol sponsorship and branding at sporting events and music concerts, may send the implicit message to young people that alcohol consumption is necessary to fully enjoy these events. Teenagers in particular, who are beginning to establish their own personal identities, are especially vulnerable in this context.

Despite previous claims by the alcohol industry to the contrary, documents presented to the House of Commons Health Select Committee⁵³ have clearly shown that alcohol promotional strategies specifically target young people. For example, market research data on 15 and 16 year-olds has been used to guide alcohol industry campaigns, and references have been made to the need to recruit new drinkers and establish their loyalty to a particular brand. Carling, for instance, regarded its Carling Weekend as “the first choice for the festival virgin”, offering free branded tents and a breakfast can of beer.⁵⁴ (Carling’s sponsorship of this event ended in 2007).

Likewise, WKD has denied that its sponsorship of the Nuts magazine’s football awards associated alcohol with sporting success and masculinity.⁵⁵ Lambrini, sponsors of “Coleen’s Real Women”



television programme, has been criticised for the fact that the presenter, Coleen Rooney, was only 23 years old at the time of its first broadcast on ITV2 (and therefore below the legal age of 25 for appearing in a conventional alcohol advertisement).⁵⁶ Similarly, Aaron Ramsey was pictured in the national press being awarded the Brains Trophy for Wales' Young Footballer of the Year in October 2010, despite being only 19 years of age at the time.⁵⁷

It is clear that such sponsorship deals, whether intentionally or not, provide a platform to reach and tap into youth culture, and to reach target age groups. Baileys, for example, as part of its wish to shake off its previous association with older drinkers and to communicate with "a young, socially active female audience",⁵⁸ sponsored the

television show 'Sex and the City' on Channel 4 for nine weeks in 2001. Research carried out in January and March 2001 showed that awareness of the brand was up by 26% compared to the same months in the previous year, with a 60% growth in awareness amongst 18-35s.⁵⁹

"Whether or not under-18s are deliberately targeted, it is clear that (alcohol) producers are interested in the very youngest end of the legal drinking market. This is for a variety of reasons. Some brands have a constant need to replenish the customer base with new recruits... For other brands, the aspiration is to create interest and inculcate loyalty at a young age in order to retain customers as they mature."

Prof. Gerard Hastings (2010)⁶⁰

Box 4: Alcohol and young people in Wales

- 40% of 15 year-olds in Wales drink alcohol on a weekly basis⁶¹
- 20% of 15 year-olds report having been drunk for the first time at age 13 or younger⁶²
- Since 1990 the amount of alcohol consumed by 11 to 15 year-olds has doubled⁶³
- More than 250,000 young people aged 11 to 16 in Wales report being drunk at least twice, representing more than a quarter of that age group⁶⁴
- In 2009-10 there were around 1,249 referrals for treatment of alcohol misuse in Wales amongst patients aged 19 and younger⁶⁵

Focus group findings: young people's views on alcohol marketing

In October 2010, Alcohol Concern Cymru commissioned an independent market research company to consult with young people in Wales, in order to gather their views about alcohol industry sponsorship of sporting and cultural events. A mixed gender group of 16 and 17 year old students from Coleg Menai in Bangor was brought together to discuss their understanding of alcohol industry sponsorships and how this, and other forms of marketing, may impact on their actual drinking behaviours, as well as their general perceptions of alcohol consumption. The group comprised ten students and the discussion took place on 22 October 2010.

Following an initial 'getting to know you' session, the group were first asked to describe their drinking experiences. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the consensus was that drinking was an integral part of their social life, enhancing their moods on nights out and promoting behaviour likely to amuse their peers. This was despite the fact that not a single member of the group was legally old enough to purchase alcohol.

When asked about their choice of drink, lagers such as Carling and Budweiser were popular with the males, whilst the females preferred vodka and cider. Fosters, for example, was considered "trendy, because of the adverts for it and it's cheap to buy".

Box 5: A summary of the key findings from our focus group

- The young people's awareness of alcohol sponsorship was high with regard to sporting events. However, recall was lower in relation to TV programme sponsorship, and very low for music and other cultural events.
- The group were largely unconcerned about the ethics of alcohol sponsorship, and seemed to consider it a normal part of the sporting and cultural scene. This was particularly true in the case of sports sponsorship by the drinks industry.
- The group generally felt that sport and alcohol went hand in hand: both were enjoyable and conjured up images of fun with friends, and the relationship between the two was something that they were reluctant to see changed. This contrasted with their views on tobacco and sport, which were generally seen as incompatible.
- The young people generally did not feel that they were targeted by alcohol sponsorship. Even though research suggests that young people are being targeted, the majority were unconcerned and accepted this as being just a part of their normal life.
- Many expressed surprise that alcohol sponsorship and advertising were largely self-regulated by the industry, but again were reluctant to see this system changed.
- The group demonstrated that brand image played a part in their drinks selection. However, this played a lesser role compared to availability and price which were the key drivers in this group.



Reflecting the common desire of teenagers to demonstrate more adult tastes, many of the group felt that they had progressed from alcopops and certain other drinks:

"Not White Lightening – that's for twelve year-olds..."

It is well known that young people tend to purchase and consume cheaper drinks,⁶⁶ and price was clearly a major influence for this particular group:

"...you go into Morrisons or Tescos you see 'buy three crates for £20' and think 'stock up for the weekend'."

"Price is a big factor for all."

"I just go round to Morrisons and spot beer deals, you text your mates to get it."

"Tesco Value Cider – you can get it for £1.57"

Before providing the young people with a definition of alcohol sponsorship, the group were asked to say what came to mind. Awareness of sporting events associated with alcohol sponsorship was high, although awareness of sponsorship of cultural events was much lower, possibly due to the limited number of sponsored concerts or events which take place in north Wales.

Working in subgroups, the young people were asked to recall examples of sponsored events, and for each one to state the name of the sponsor and whom the sponsorship targeted. The examples are shown in Box 6 below:

Box 6: Unprompted recall of alcohol sponsorship

Event	Sponsor	Target audience
Carling Cup	Carling	Male 20-50
Worthington Cup	Worthingtons	Male 20-50
BDO Darts	John Smiths	Male 40+
PDC Darts	Holsten Pils	Male 40+, families
Premiership Rugby	Guinness	Male 18+
Heineken Cup	Heineken	Male 18+
Everton FC	Chang Beer	Male 16+
Liverpool FC	Carlsberg	Male/Female 13+
Festivals	Red Stripe	Young people
Come Dine With Me	Hardys Wine	Couples 30+
Radio One Weekend	Bacardi	Males/Females 16+
Radio One Weekend	Carling	Male 16+
Chelsea FC	Singha Beer	Male 16+
Celebrity Juice	Frosty Jack's	Young adults around 18, mostly male
ITV2 Movies	Pimms, Carling	All age groups
Rugby Union	Brains	Male 18+
Magners League	Magners	Male 18+



Radio One's Big Weekend and Wakestock were the only music events that the participants had experienced locally, and most of the students did not see a link between alcohol companies and these types of cultural events. However, they recalled that Carling had a presence at the Radio One event in summer 2010 in north Wales, although this was thought to be advertising rather than sponsorship.

Respondents thought that sponsorship primarily existed in order to demonstrate the manufacturer's status and position in the marketplace, to enhance the image of events themselves and attract a larger audience, and to provide alcohol companies with an ideal platform to launch new drinks:

"It says they are a big company, a successful company."

"They're doing it for the money to sell more beer."

"It maybe makes you drink by it being there."

The young people recognised that drinks companies had long been associated with sports sponsorship in particular. All but one respondent felt that there were no problems with linking alcohol with sports and cultural events, and that it had become the accepted norm:

"You just enjoy yourself when you are drinking watching sports. It's just something that you do."

This notion that alcohol and sport go hand in hand appears to be something that alcohol companies are keen to reinforce, and sponsorship deals help to deliver this message. John Roscoe, Marketing Director for Guinness GB, for example, when unveiling its new partnership deal with the English, Scottish and Welsh Rugby Unions in November 2010, stated:

"A pint of Guinness with your friends is the perfect accompaniment to a game of rugby and has been for a long time... we are encouraging fans, whoever their team is, and wherever they watch

the rugby, to experience it together over a pint of the black stuff."⁶⁷

Whilst the group of young people did not believe that they are specifically targeted by alcohol companies, they did recognise a deeply ingrained cultural link between sport and alcohol. This applied especially for the males, who felt that watching and participating in sports gave them a legitimate reason to drink:

"Beer goes hand in hand with football."

"Yeah, cos after a game the players all go for a huge session."

"It's a reason to go to the pub to watch football."

Although there was surprise expressed at the largely self-regulatory system in place for alcohol sponsorship, there was a consensus that no further restrictions were needed, and some concern that official regulation would be too heavy handed:

"The Government would just ban it completely like everything else."

"They're doing a good job as it is now"

"[Alcohol's] not advertised too much"

The students were also asked to consider comparisons between smoking and drinking. Two respondents felt that smoking and drinking posed an equal risk to their health, whilst one suggested drinking was more dangerous, which caused much disagreement amongst the majority who believed that smoking was far more likely to cause health problems than alcohol. Whilst there was some dispute as to whether tobacco sponsorship of events was still allowed or had been banned in this country, there was a general belief that, unlike alcohol, tobacco and sport were not appropriate partners:

"No, it's not banned – nobody wants them, nobody wants to be sponsored by smoking."

"I think it should be banned because it does not set a good example with sport."

Discussion and recommendations

"The promotion of alcohol is an enormously well-funded, ingenious and pervasive aspect of modern life, trying to recruit new generations of drinkers and speaking for pro-drinking attitudes, and heavy alcohol consumption. Self-regulation of alcohol advertising and marketing has been shown to be fragile and largely ineffective."

World Health Organisation, 2004⁶⁸

It is clear from what drinks industry representatives say that sponsorship of sporting and cultural events is an important part of their marketing mix. By associating their brands and products with events that many of us enjoy, sponsorship promotes the impression that alcohol consumption is a pleasurable experience and part of a fulfilling and varied social life. Indeed, it can be argued that alcohol promotion and sponsorship at events such as music concerts and sports may send out the message that alcohol is somehow necessary to enjoy these events.

Given the obvious desire of the drinks industry to link itself with some of the main events in our sporting and cultural calendar, it is only fair to ask whether this relationship is a healthy one. In particular, we need to look carefully at whether alcohol sponsorship of events is providing a channel by which industry marketing messages are reaching young people below the legal age to purchase alcohol.

These questions are especially relevant to the world of sport, so much of the appeal of which is based on physical achievement and good health, and yet which so often involves sponsorship deals that promote a potentially harmful substance. To illustrate, during the 2010 football World Cup, viewers were able to vote for each game's man of the match via the fifa.com website, with the player receiving most votes rewarded with a Budweiser



man of the match trophy, as part of its 'official beer' deal.⁶⁹ Current and former England football stars appeared in Carlsberg promotional materials in 2006. Likewise, Wales' rugby players have regularly appeared in Brains promotional materials as part of its sponsorship of the national side.⁷⁰

Recent research from Australia has shown how alcohol advertising on television (particularly during sporting competitions with alcohol sponsors) potentially increases the likelihood of children associating alcohol consumption with sporting success.⁷¹ This is especially worrying given that, for example, 1.6 million children aged 4-15 years old viewed alcohol advertisements aired in the commercial breaks during an England World Cup football match in June 2010.⁷² Fans at the actual event, and of all ages, may be similarly exposed: as an illustration, a spectator at a rugby match may view alcohol branding on players' shirts and replica shirts amongst the crowd; on billboards around the pitch; in the match-day programme; and all whilst consuming the 'official' stadium beer either at the ground or post-match.

Critics have argued that restrictions on alcohol promotion and advertising are unwarranted due to a lack of clear evidence that such activities directly cause people to begin or increase their drinking.⁷³ However, establishing this causal link – to be able to clearly demonstrate that exposure to alcohol sponsorship, for example, has directly impacted on an individual's drinking behaviour, and to isolate this from the 'noise' of the other innumerable potential influences, such as upbringing, peer and parental influences, and social norms – is extremely difficult and impractical. Whilst causality has been difficult to prove, what researchers have been able to demonstrate is a clear association between drinking and alcohol promotion,⁷⁴ i.e. that there is a relationship of some sort between these two variables.



Perhaps as a consequence of the limited evidence base, the will amongst governments to regulate sponsorship activities has been somewhat lacking.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, a number of countries have imposed at least some form of restriction on alcohol industry sponsorship of sporting and/or cultural events (see Boxes 2 and 3). Moreover, criticisms of such sponsorship deals have been frequently voiced at an international level, particularly regarding the unwelcome association between alcohol and major sporting events. For example, when Anheuser Bush (owners of Budweiser) used the Olympic rings logo in its advertising as official sponsor of the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996, critics argued that this strategy targeted youth and was incompatible with athletic activities,⁷⁶ whilst several substance misuse groups expressed concern about the same company's association with the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah.⁷⁷ Similarly, in 1998 the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, urged members of the Collegiate Athletic Association not to accept alcohol sponsorships.⁷⁸

"We have long accepted that sport is not an appropriate arena for tobacco sponsorship and yet it seems strange that products such as alcohol are deemed suitable. It is difficult to reconcile the presence of... alcohol brands with the ambition of creating an active and healthy lifestyle."

Dr. Jeff Collin, 2007⁷⁹

Encouragingly, the 2012 London Olympics has, at the time of writing, no formal sponsorship deals with the alcohol industry. This may be in part because this does not sit comfortably with the Organising Committee's vision to "realise a step change in the nation's attitude towards healthy living",⁸⁰ although this has not prevented a widely criticised sponsorship agreement with a major

chocolate manufacturer.⁸¹

It is worth noting that a number of the other arguments put forward by the alcohol industry against further restrictions on sponsorship mirror those put forward in previous decades by the tobacco industry, ultimately unsuccessfully.

"The current problems with UK alcohol promotion are reminiscent of those seen before tobacco advertising was banned, when attempts to control content and adjust targeting simply resulted in more cryptic and imaginative campaigns."

Prof. Gerard Hastings et al, 2010⁸²

According to the European Sponsorship Association, alcohol manufacturers "have freedom of commercial speech and should have the freedom to tell consumers about their products."⁸³ These same arguments were being put forward by the tobacco industry in the USA as long ago as the early 1970s in their objections to a proposed television advertising ban. Tobacco companies argued that such a ban would represent an unconstitutional infringement of free speech. However, the American courts ruled that the airwaves were public property and therefore subject to regulation "in the public interest".⁸⁴

Another drinks industry argument against restrictions on alcohol sponsorship is that it would result in a loss of funding for sports and cultural activities, and international event organisers choosing to stage activities or tournaments elsewhere.⁸⁵ Once again, similar arguments have previously been put forward in the tobacco field, and have subsequently been proven to be unfounded. The tobacco advertising and sponsorship ban was finally fully implemented in the UK in 2005.⁸⁶ Whilst the ban was initially felt to be a particular threat to certain sports such



as snooker and Formula 1 racing, both sports are now considered to be on the rise, and have attracted new non-tobacco sponsors^{87 88} and launched new competitions and events.^{89 90}

"It would be remiss to not acknowledge the legitimate concerns sports organisations have in relation to the potential loss of revenue if alcohol producers were to cease the sponsorship of sports. It would be equally remiss, however, not to acknowledge the costs of alcohol-related harm to those who participate and watch sports."

Alcohol Action Ireland (2009)⁹¹

Given the known risks of excessive alcohol consumption to public health, restrictions on alcohol promotion similar to those imposed on tobacco sponsorship are clearly in the interests of the public. One counter argument is that, unlike smoking, drinking in moderation is not necessarily incompatible with a healthy lifestyle. However, there can be no question that many sport and music events have direct appeal to young people, and sponsorship of these by the alcohol industry cannot be considered appropriate given that the evidence shows that young people are particularly vulnerable to alcohol promotion, influencing their attitudes towards and perceptions of drinking and risking their long-term health. In 2009-10 there were around 1,249 referrals for treatment of alcohol misuse in Wales amongst patients aged 19 and younger. Furthermore, for all age groups there is no such thing as safe drinking: the more alcohol consumed, the greater the risk of alcohol-related disease or damage.⁹²

This raises a more fundamental consideration about where the burden of responsibility should lie when considering the appropriateness of drinks industry sponsorship. It can be argued that we need to adopt what has been referred to as the

'precautionary principle'.⁹³ The principle asserts that we should take preventative action in the face of uncertainty, and therefore this shifts the burden of proof to the proponents of any potentially harmful activity, guided by the likelihood of risk rather than the potential for profit.⁹⁴

"It should not be left to the public to demonstrate that alcohol industry sponsorship is harmful but, rather, it should be up to the proponents of the activity, i.e. the alcohol industry, to show that the practice is harmless. In the meantime, government should prohibit the practice in the interest of reducing unhealthy alcohol use."

K. Kypri et al, 2009⁹⁵

Sponsorship is part of a marketing mix designed to attract new drinkers and increase sales in existing drinkers. Carlsberg's sponsorship of the 1998 football World Cup, for example, saw its sales rise to three million pints in pubs and 45 million cans through off-licences.⁹⁶ Recent research findings from the United States challenge industry claims that advertising and promotional activities merely encourage consumers to switch brands and do not influence the amount that young people drink.⁹⁷ It is true that alcohol companies are in competition with each other for market share, but they also have a common interest in promoting the benefits of alcohol consumption in general⁹⁸ and recruiting new drinkers.



"The fact that promotion is allowed, ubiquitous and heavily linked to mainstream culture, communicates a legitimacy and status to alcohol that belies the harms associated with its use. It also severely limits the effectiveness of any public health message."

British Medical Association (2009)⁹⁹

It is rare to see any sponsorship deals accompanied by messages regarding the potential negative effects of alcohol. Of course, there have been a variety of social responsibility campaigns and educational activities by both individual drinks companies and Drinkaware in recent years. However, competitive pressures within the industry are strong¹⁰⁰ and the alcohol misuse messages are typically based around 'smarter drinking'¹⁰¹ rather than significantly lowering consumption levels. This is perhaps not surprising given it has been estimated that if everyone drank within sensible limits, drinks industry profits in the UK would fall by at least 40%.¹⁰² Moreover, whilst education does have a role to play, it is unlikely to achieve sustained behavioural change in an environment where around £800 million is spent annually by the industry on alcohol promotion, where alcohol is increasingly affordable and more widely available, and where social norms support heavy drinking.

Alcohol sponsorship is only weakly addressed in the advertising codes, and this has allowed alcohol producers to take advantage of the resulting regulatory ambiguity and make further connections with young people. The process of self-regulation, whereby the advertising codes are regulated by representatives of the alcohol industry, is not fit for purpose. A recent report by Professor Hastings and colleagues, following analysis of previously unseen industry documents, has highlighted how the self-regulatory controls are failing, with advertisers still managing to

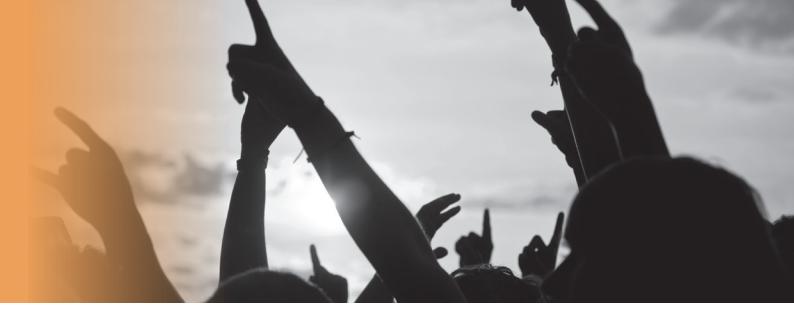
appeal to young people and promote drinking.¹⁰³

"There is an ever increasing amount of evidence to show that alcohol promotion influences the drinking behaviour of young people and current voluntary approaches to controlling such promotions have been ineffective. What is now needed in the UK is a debate about whether we should adopt a more stringent set of regulations of alcohol advertising and promotion, perhaps similar to those which operate in France."

Prof. Ian Gilmore, 2009¹⁰⁴

Alcohol Concern believes that drinks industry sponsorship of sports and cultural events makes for an unhealthy mix. It is difficult to isolate the effects of particular forms of promotion, such as sponsorship, and therefore solely restricting or banning alcohol sponsorship will only have a minimal effect unless part of a wider range of measures targeting the whole scope of alcohol marketing and advertising.

The regulations set out in the French Loi Évin legislation provide an example of robust methods that could be adopted in Wales and the rest of the UK. Drawing on this example, Alcohol Concern makes the following recommendations:



Recommendation 1

No alcohol sponsorship of cultural or sporting events should be permitted.

Recommendation 2

No alcohol advertising and/or sponsorship should be allowed:

- on television and radio where more than 10% of viewers or listeners are under 18;
- in cinemas showing films with a lower than 18 certificate;
- in non-broadcast media (for example newspapers, posters, magazines) where under-18s make up more than 10% of the readership;
- on the internet.

Recommendation 4

Given that self-regulatory alcohol industry advertising codes have failed to protect young people, regulation should be made independent of the alcohol and advertising industries. In the longer-term, this regulation should be standardized across the European Union to reflect the alcohol industry's international operations.

Recommendation 5

Pricing policies likely to encourage consumption, particularly amongst young people, should be prohibited. This will be best achieved through the introduction of a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol, in line with the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer for Wales. Given the current lack of progress in establishing a minimum price per unit across England and Wales, Alcohol Concern supports moves to devolve the necessary powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

Recommendation 3

Where alcohol advertising and/or sponsorship is allowed, messages and images should refer only to the qualities of the products such as ABV, origin, composition, means of production and patterns of consumption, and must be accompanied by a government health message comprising at least one-sixth of air time or print space.

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An unhealthy mix?

Alcohol industry sponsorship of sport and cultural events

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