

# Counting the Cost

Irresponsible alcohol promotions  
in the night-time economy in Wales



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 August 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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### Published by

Alcohol Concern, 64 Leman Street,  
London, E1 8EU. Tel: 020 7264 0510,  
Fax: 020 7488 9213,  
Email: [contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk](mailto:contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk)  
Website: [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

### On behalf of

Alcohol Concern Cymru, Sophia House,  
28 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ  
Tel: 029 2066 0248, Fax: 029 2066 0249,  
Email: [acwales@alcoholconcern.org.uk](mailto:acwales@alcoholconcern.org.uk)

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Cover photograph taken from 'Cardiff at Night' collection, one of a series of photographs taken by Maciej Dakowicz on the city centre streets of the Welsh capital on Friday and Saturday nights over a period of four years.

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# Executive summary

Irresponsible alcohol promotions in pubs, bars and clubs are contributing to excessive consumption amongst the public, resulting in alcohol-related crime and disorder, and adverse health consequences. They propagate an unsafe drinking culture and bold measures are now required to reduce harmful drinking and avoid preventable deaths.

Alcohol Concern has been examining the prevalence of alcohol promotions within the night-time economy in Wales. We commissioned a snapshot survey at three locations in Wales - Newport, Swansea and Wrexham – surveying a total of 43 licensed venues on a Friday evening in November 2009. Data was collected on the nature and extent of such promotions, the prices of the cheapest alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, and any health promotion/sensible drinking messages displayed at each venue.

Our survey found that approximately half of venues were offering some form of alcoholic drinks promotion. A number of these promotions, such as three-for-one deals and charging a single fee after which all drinks are free, are regarded by Alcohol Concern as being particularly irresponsible. These deals encourage people to consume large quantities of alcohol over a short period of time, and offer a financial incentive to consume more than intended. In addition, the prices of individual drinks were found to be worryingly low in many instances: at least four venues offered pints for as little as £1, in some cases less than the lowest price of soft drinks available; 12 venues offered spirits, sometimes in double measures, for just £1. At these prices, a woman could drink more than twice the recommended daily amount of alcohol - the usual definition of a binge - for just £3 and a man could binge for as little £4.

**Alcohol Concern makes the following recommendations, which we believe will go some way to addressing the issues highlighted in this report:**

## Recommendation 1

In recognition of the growth of alcohol misuse as a public health issue, and in order to enable licensing authorities to properly address this issue, the protection and improvement of public health needs to be established as a fifth objective within the Licensing Act 2003. Amending the Act to take account of harmful drinking levels within local communities and associated levels of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality will add substantial momentum to efforts to reduce these harms.

## Recommendation 2

Alcohol Concern's survey has found irresponsible alcohol promotions that may incentivise greater consumption to be highly prevalent in the night-time economy. Further tightening of the Home Office's mandatory code of practice is therefore required, in order to effectively restrict promotions of all types that encourage excessive consumption. This will have the effect of reducing alcohol-related crime and disorder and harm to public health, whilst also encouraging premises to compete on the basis of criteria such as facilities, entertainment and atmosphere, rather than on price.



### **Recommendation 3**

Given that any further restrictions on the on-trade may simply lead to an increase in off-trade sales, potentially resulting in increased home-drinking, a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol needs to be implemented in both the on-trade and off-trade across England and Wales. This would eliminate some of the most irresponsible promotions, including the end of deep-discounting at supermarkets and off-licenses, whilst having very little effect on the cost of drinking for moderate drinkers. Research shows that a minimum 50p per unit would mean an increase in cost of only 23p per week for moderate drinkers, but could bring savings in healthcare costs of £1.37 billion over 10 years.<sup>1</sup> In Wales, this would equate to savings of £79 million over 10 years.

### **Recommendation 5**

If significant progress cannot soon be made in tackling irresponsible alcohol promotions across England and Wales and establishing a minimum price per unit, Alcohol Concern supports moves to devolve the necessary powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

### **Recommendation 4**

Current voluntary arrangements are failing to ensure that adequate unit and health information is clearly displayed at points of sale. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) should lobby the government in Westminster to establish a levy from the drinks industry to pass onto a wholly independent health promotion body. This body, answerable to WAG, the Department of Health and the Home Office, should create the health and awareness messages and campaigns that consumers need to see. The industry should be mandated to carry these health and unit information messages on all of its products and wherever alcohol is sold. This will help raise unit literacy amongst consumers and provide them with consistent advice about safe levels of drinking, helping to change the culture of drinking to get drunk.

# Introduction

Alcohol consumption in the UK has increased markedly in the last 70 years. The problems associated with excessive consumption and binge-drinking (consuming large quantities over a short period of time), in particular adverse health and social consequences, are widely acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> Rising rates of consumption have coincided with a relaxation of licensing laws and a decline in the real price of alcohol relative to average income.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown a clear link between this increasing affordability of alcohol and rising consumption. In short, as the price of alcohol has decreased in the UK, consumption has increased,<sup>4</sup> bringing with it a corresponding increase in a range of health problems.<sup>5</sup> Equally worrying, levels of violence-related harm have also been causally linked to the price of alcohol.<sup>6</sup>

The advertising and promotion of alcohol has also increased significantly during recent decades.<sup>7</sup> Much of this has been led by off-license retailers, particularly the major supermarkets. However, promotional schemes in pubs, bars and clubs (collectively known as the on-trade) are also well-established. Such schemes often originally took the form of a 'happy hour', whereby establishments offer reduced priced alcoholic beverages for a specified short period. These have since evolved to include a wide range of promotions, including extended 'happy hours', 'buy-one-get-one-free' and 'all you can drink' offers, a result of intense competition between licensed premises seeking to offer the best deal in order to attract customers

There is growing concern about the possible negative consequences of such promotions, particularly health implications and rising incidences of drunken violence.<sup>8</sup> Studies examining consumption and the on-trade have shown a correlation between higher binge-drinking rates and lower prices and promotions,<sup>9</sup> with bar-sponsored promotions positively influencing the expectations and intentions of customers to consume more alcohol.<sup>10</sup>

This report looks at the issue of drinks promotions in the on-trade, focusing particularly on the public health implications of the irresponsible sale and promotion of alcohol. It makes a number of challenging recommendations for changes to legislation, policy and practice, in order to encourage and support movement towards a more balanced and healthy drinking culture.

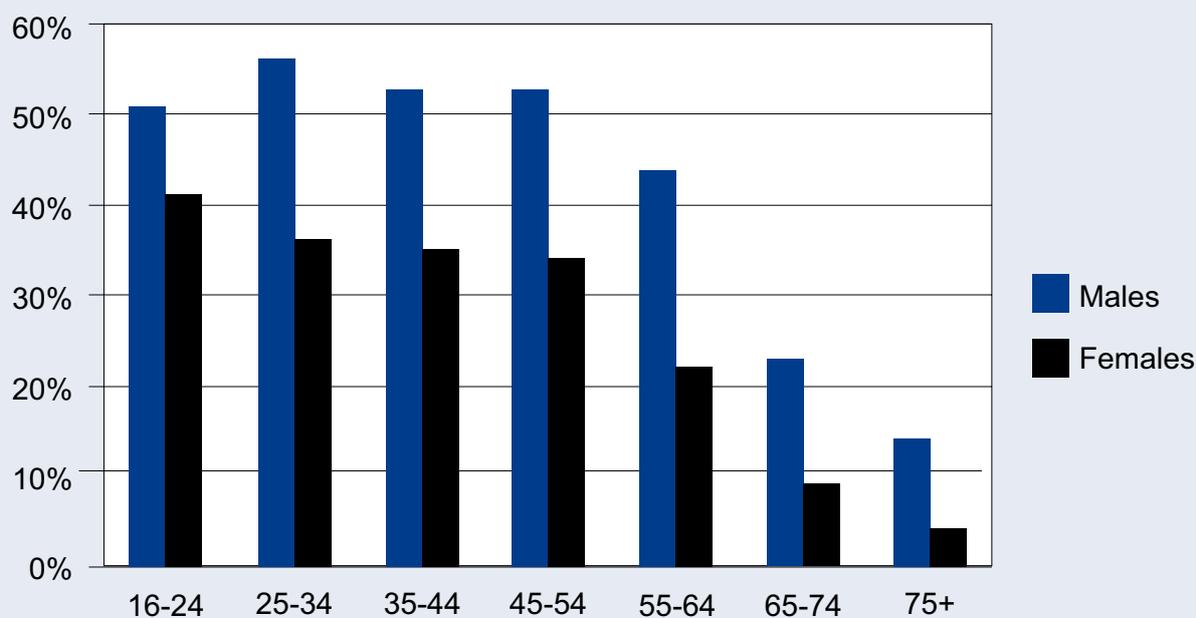
# Alcohol misuse in Wales

Alcohol is a major preventable cause of illness and death, with approximately 13,000 hospital admissions and around 1,000 deaths per year in Wales attributable to alcohol.<sup>11</sup> 45% of adults in Wales admit drinking above the recommended limits (2-3 units per day for a woman and 3-4 units per day for a man) and 28% admit to binge-drinking (drinking at least double the recommended daily amount over a short period of time).<sup>12</sup> These figures may well be an underestimate, and increased levels of alcohol consumption in Wales are now regarded as a national problem.<sup>13</sup>

It has been estimated that alcohol-related harm costs Wales £1 billion per year.<sup>14</sup> In recognition of what is clearly a growing problem, the Welsh Assembly Government's substance misuse strategy *Working Together to Reduce Harm* was launched in 2008, setting out a national agenda to reduce harm caused by alcohol, drugs and other substances.<sup>15</sup> One of the strategy's four main areas for action is tackling the inappropriate availability of alcohol and its impact on communities in Wales.

**Figure 1:**

## Percentage who reported drinking above guidelines in the past week in Wales by age and sex



Source: Welsh Health Survey 2007

# Licensing, public health and the night-time economy

The Licensing Act 2003 came into force in England and Wales in November 2005, against a backdrop of media concern about ‘binge Britain’ and alcohol-related violence in the night-time economy.<sup>16</sup> The Act aimed to modernise and simplify the existing licensing laws by introducing a single premises licence covering the provision of alcohol, entertainment and refreshments late at night, replacing the six types of licenses that had previously existed,<sup>17</sup> and abolishing set licensing hours. Under the new legislation, responsibility for licensing was transferred from licensing judges sitting at magistrates’ courts to local authorities, who are expected to grant licenses unless doing so would be contrary to the Act’s four licensing objectives. The four objectives are:

- prevention of crime and disorder
- prevention of public nuisance
- public safety
- protection of children from harm.

One of the legislation’s central aims was to “create safer and more civilised evening and night-time economies”.<sup>18</sup> However, overall indicators suggest that so far it has failed to make a sizeable impact on incidences of alcohol-related disorder, instead merely displacing offences to later in the night.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, people who visit pubs, bars and clubs are still at more risk of violence than those who do not, with 17% of all recorded violent incidents committed in and around such venues.<sup>20</sup> A survey undertaken by YouGov in 2009 on behalf of Alcohol Concern found that 45% of adults in Wales regard their town centre as a ‘no-go’ area at night due to alcohol-related problems.<sup>21</sup>

Since the passing of the Licensing Act 2003 vast resources have continued to be channelled into increasing security and tackling crime and disorder in the night-time economy, such as additional policing and closed circuit television.<sup>22</sup> These have been supplemented by further

legislative powers and sanctions including Cumulative Impact Policies, which allow for a presumption against the granting of new premises licences within a given area, and Drinking Banning Orders (DBOs) which enable the exclusion of particular individuals from licensed premises within a defined geographical area.<sup>23</sup>

In May 2009, the Home Office launched a consultation on a new code of practice for alcohol retailers in England and Wales.<sup>24</sup> This consultation sought views on a range of proposed mandatory licensing conditions across England and Wales aimed at ensuring the responsible retailing of alcohol. One stated aim of the proposed code was to “stamp out the irresponsible promotions that lead to people drinking more and faster than they otherwise might”.<sup>25</sup>

Alcohol Concern is broadly supportive of such a national mandatory code.<sup>26</sup> The results of a joint survey conducted in 2009 by the charity with the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Nursing and the Faculty of Public Health showed that 77% of respondents believe that price promotions which encourage and incentivise excessive drinking in the on-trade should be banned.<sup>27</sup> However, Alcohol Concern has highlighted that the code, which is expected to be introduced in England and Wales from April 2010, would not prevent certain sales promotions, for example those in which products are offered at a cut price dependent upon the sale of another product. Alcohol Concern therefore advocates further tightening of the code in order to restrict promotions of all types that incentivise excessive consumption.



## Learning from the Scottish example

The need to tackle irresponsible promotions is central to the new licensing system in Scotland which took effect from 1 September 2009. Changes in Scotland have come about in direct response to concerns about increasing health problems related to alcohol.

Key features of the new system in Scotland include:

- The banning of irresponsible drinks promotions in the on-trade. These are defined as any promotions that:
  - relate specifically to alcoholic drinks likely to appeal largely to people under the age of 18
  - involve the supply of an alcoholic drink free of charge or at a discount on the purchase of one or more drinks
  - involve the supply of an extra measure of a drink free of charge or at a discount on the purchase of one or more measures
  - involve the supply of unlimited amounts of alcohol for a fixed charge
  - encourage people to drink more than they intended, or to drink quickly
  - are based on the alcoholic strength of any drink
  - offer alcohol as a reward or prize (unless it is in a sealed container and consumed off the premises)
- Banning the sale of alcohol at different prices at different times of day. Any variation in price must be for a minimum of 72 hours, effectively ending happy hours.
- Tap water fit for drinking must be provided at on-sales premises free of charge on request, and other non-alcoholic drinks must be available at a reasonable price
- The inclusion of a fifth licensing objective: ‘protecting and improving public health’.

Consideration has also been given to the introduction of a minimum price per unit of alcohol in Scotland.



Alcohol Concern supports changes to the licensing system in England and Wales. In particular, as in Scotland, the inclusion of a public health objective in the licensing legislation, coupled with the collection of robust local health data, would allow local authorities to determine the impact of the alcohol sales on local residents' health, and therefore provide them with an additional lever to refuse, withdraw or impose conditions on individual licenses, especially where crime and disorder concerns are difficult to link to particular venues. Alcohol Concern argues that amending the Licensing Act 2003 to take account of harmful drinking levels within local communities and associated levels of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality would add substantial momentum to efforts to improve health through reducing levels of consumption.

Along with Alcohol Focus Scotland, Alcohol Concern supports the proposals that have been discussed in Scotland to introduce a minimum price for alcohol there. Researchers from the University of Sheffield commissioned by the Scottish Government estimated that a 40p minimum price would bring savings in Scotland's healthcare costs of £160 million over ten years.<sup>28</sup> Similar research in England by the same team concluded that a minimum price of 50p per unit would mean an increase in cost of only 23p per week for moderate drinkers, but could bring savings in healthcare costs of £1.37 billion over 10 years.<sup>29</sup> In Wales, this would equate to savings of £79 million over 10 years.

The inclusion of a public health objective within the Licensing Act is supported by WAG. It has also expressed support for "reducing demand [for alcohol] through increases in taxation and/or the introduction of minimum pricing."<sup>30</sup> Legislation in both these areas is presently not devolved to Wales, and WAG has stated that it will press the case for change with Ministers in Westminster or seek to "reach agreement on where Wales and England legislation can be varied in Wales under the measure making powers in the Government of Wales Act 2006".<sup>31</sup> If significant progress cannot soon be made in tackling the irresponsible sale of alcohol across England and Wales, Alcohol Concern supports moves to devolve the necessary powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

# Managing the night-time economy in Wales – examples of innovative practice

In Wales, there have been a number of positive initiatives seeking to reduce the number of alcohol-related problems in towns and city centres at night. One particularly successful initiative has been the Cardiff Traffic Light System, which focuses on the link between violence and injuries and particular licensed premises.

## Case Study 1

### Traffic Light System - Cardiff

Cardiff has more licensing capacity per square metre in the city centre than any other location in the United Kingdom; there are a total of 1,462 licensed premises in Cardiff. On a typical weekend, over 40,000 people take part in the city's night-time economy.

In September 2005, South Wales Police (SWP), in collaboration with Cardiff Licensees Forum, launched its 'Traffic Light System' (TLS) as an early intelligence tool designed to identify problematic premises licenses. TLS utilises a data sharing protocol between SWP and University Hospital of Wales (which houses the city's only Accident and Emergency Unit) to collect detailed information on the time, place and nature of alcohol-related crime and disorder.

Hospital staff have been trained to ascertain from victims who have sustained serious injury the precise location of the incident, the time and date of the incident, the type of weapon used, whether the incident has been reported to the police, and in which premises the victim had their last alcoholic drink. The data collected is analysed by the Community Safety Partnership Analyst and then used to allocate points relating to the type and severity of the recorded incident to each premises. These premises are then categorised as either red (immediate action required), amber (monitor closely) or green (no concerns). Those premises in the red category are assigned a dedicated licensing officer who meets with the premises to draw up an action plan that will seek to 'improve' the premises promptly. If premises are categorised as red for a significant period, the Violent Crime Task Group scrutinises the reasons and enforcement action can be taken, including a review of the premises' license by South Wales Police.

Encouragingly this initiative, together with a number of other complementary interventions, has helped to achieve a reduction in alcohol-related incidents linked to licensed premises within Cardiff, from 2,442 in 2006/7 to 1,552 in 2008/9.



A number of other towns and cities in Wales have implemented schemes to reduce disorder and increase personal safety in the night-time economy. In 2008, for example, WAG funding was allocated to four pilot projects in Ceredigion, Conwy and Denbighshire, Bridgend and Carmarthenshire. These projects implemented a number of positive initiatives, including:

- taxi marshals – who manage queues at taxi ranks to reduce arguments and scuffles
- street pastors or street angels – often volunteers from local churches who offer pastoral care on the street, and may give out non-alcoholic drinks, and flip-flops to reduce foot injuries to women who have removed their high-heeled shoes
- ‘behave or be banned’ (BOBB) schemes – initiatives led by licensees aimed at preventing drink-related anti-social behaviour in town centres.

The overall focus of projects such as these is to create safer and more appealing night-time economies, reducing alcohol-related crime and maximising personal safety. Whilst this is to be commended, there is also an opportunity to further explore innovative initiatives that seek to specifically address the wider public health implications of excessive consumption in the night-time economy, for example raising levels of unit literacy and increasing the awareness of the potential health consequences of regularly drinking above recommended guidelines.

A recent scheme that shows particular promise has been rolled out in Pembrokeshire using mobile phone technology to target drinkers with health information whilst they are out in two town centres and a local college campus. The project aims to encourage people to consider their drinking behaviour.

## Case Study 2

### The Dignity Campaign - Pembrokeshire

The Dignity campaign was jointly launched in October 2009 by Safer Pembrokeshire, Health Challenge Pembrokeshire and the Children and Young Peoples Partnership, along with Gencia Advertising. It aims to give ‘revellers’ in Pembrokeshire advice and health information on a range of issues via Bluetooth on their mobile phones.

The project targets drinking amongst young people, using Bluetooth to relay video messages of young people compromising their safety and their dignity in public as a result of excessive alcohol consumption. In a pilot test of the activity around 60% of the target audience with compatible phones within range downloaded the content that was offered to them. It is the first time an alcohol awareness campaign using this technology has been run in Wales, and clearly offers considerable scope for future development.

# Irresponsible drink promotions in Wales – a survey of three town/city centres

In order to assess the extent to which alcohol is being irresponsibly priced and promoted in the night-time economy, Alcohol Concern commissioned a snapshot survey in three locations across Wales. A total of 43 licensed venues (pubs, bars and clubs) were visited in the town/city centre areas of Wrexham, Newport and Swansea. Town/city centres were chosen as these are areas in which there is typically a high density of licensed premises, regularly attracting large numbers of people to the night-time economy, particularly at weekends.

The survey took place on Friday 13 November 2009 between 5pm and 11pm. At each location two researchers, aged 18 or over, collected data on:

- the number and type of alcohol promotions in and around each premises, including flyers and discount cards
- the prices of the cheapest alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks (either from the venue's staff or the bar menu)
- any health promotion / sensible drinking messages (for example 'drink responsibly') on display.

Following the typical night-time drinking pattern of consumers, pubs and bars were visited earlier in the evening and then nightclubs later in the evening. The researchers were not permitted to consume alcohol during the data collection.

Although, the survey focused on three specific urban locations in Wales, it is likely that the results are relevant to many other towns and cities across England and Wales, particularly given that many of the venues surveyed are part of large chains with nationwide pricing and promotion policies.

## Survey Findings

### A summary of the overall findings

The survey found a large proportion of licensed premises offering promotions incentivising higher consumption:

- 21 of the 43 venues (49%) surveyed were found to be offering some form of alcoholic drinks promotion. In comparison, only five (12%) were offering discounts on non-alcoholic beverages.
- Promotions included 'happy hours' (all of which ran for longer than one hour), half-price drinks, 'go large' on spirits, buy two glasses of wine and get the rest of the bottle free, four pint jugs for £5, selected drinks for £1, two-for-one and three-for-one deals.
- Two nightclubs offered all-inclusive deals, whereby a fee was paid at the door after which alcoholic drinks were available free.
- At least four venues offered pints for as little as £1, often less than the lowest price of soft drinks available. 12 venues (28%) offered shots of spirits for £1, including three venues offering double measures of spirits for £1.
- Themed nights were found at nightclubs encouraging customers to 'get plastered' and 'go mental'. Similarly, alcoholic drinks were branded as 'shooters' and 'slimers'.
- 17 venues (40%) were found to have no sensible drinking messages on display.
- Whilst there was no evidence of organised drinking games or the targeting of particular sexes, promotional deals specifically targeting university students were widespread.



These figures indicate that there is extensive irresponsible discounting of alcohol in the on-trade. A more detailed breakdown of the findings at each of the three locations is below.

## Swansea

Of the 21 venues in Swansea included within our survey, 11 (52%) were found to be offering some form of alcoholic drinks promotion. Promotions were evident across all three types of venue surveyed: pub, bars and nightclubs. Five venues were promoting 'happy hours', although all of these were actually longer than a single hour. Five establishments were targeting offers at university students, albeit on a separate evening. Other promotions in evidence included two-for-one and half-price deals, '4 shots for a tenner' and 4 pints for £5. Customers at the No Sign Bar on Wind Street were invited to 'go large on spirits' – buy a double measure at a discount.

The prices of individual drinks were found to be very low in some establishments. The Bank Statement offered 330ml bottles of Becks lager for 99p. Elsewhere three venues offered £1 a pint deals on lager and cider. At the Oceana club two-for-one deals were available between 5pm and 7pm, with the cheapest pint of lager costing £1.80 and 125ml glass of wine £1.90. Reflex offered £1 for a pint of cider, yet their cheapest soft drink was £1.40 for a 300ml glass of cola.

Four venues on Wind Street all offered £1 shots of spirits. Idols offered a 'wheel of fortune' which was activated regularly throughout the night to reveal discount promotions, and 'plastered everywhere' branding. Meanwhile, Play nightclub offered an all-inclusive night whereby customers pay £10 at the door and drinks are then free all night.

Ice Bar offered £1 a pint and £1 a shot deals, yet no 'sensible drinking' posters/messages were seen to be on display. Indeed, a total of 12 of the 21 venues (57%) had no sensible drinking messages visible to the surveyors.

**Swansea summary table:**

Venue	Cheapest pint £	Cheapest bottle beer £	Cheapest glass of wine £	Cheapest shot of spirits £	Cheapest soft drink £	Discount / promotion on alcohol drinks?	Discount / promotion on non-alcoholic drinks?	Sensible drinking messages visible?
Bank Statement	1.99	0.99	2.10	1.59	0.60	Y	N	N
Ice Bar	1.00	1.50	1.75	1.00	0.50	Y	N	N
So Bar	2.90	2.00	2.25	1.25	0.90	N	N	Y
Reflex	1.00	1.00	2.75	1.25	1.40	N	Y	Y
Flares	2.00	1.80	2.00	1.00	0.50	Y	N	Y
The Lounge	2.50	2.65	2.50	1.00	1.40	N	N	N
Molokos	2.50	2.90	2.75	2.00	1.00	N	N	N
La Parella	3.40	3.00	5.00	2.00	1.25	N	N	N
Lava Lounge	2.95	3.00	3.95	2.00	2.00	Y	N	N
Revolution	3.30	3.40	3.80	2.00	0.70	Y	Y	Y
Oceana	1.80	2.10	1.90	1.95	0.40	Y	Y	Y
Aspers	3.00	3.00	2.50	2.75	2.00	N	N	N
Play	2.40	3.00	4.80	1.00	1.00	Y	N	Y
Morgans	3.80	3.90	4.25	3.10	2.30	N	N	N
Idols	1.00	1.50	1.50	1.00	0.40	Y	N	N
Pump House	2.60	2.90	5.00	2.60	1.50	N	N	Y
Adelphi	2.40	2.60	2.10	1.10	0.80	N	N	Y
Pitcher Piano	2.10	2.60	2.20	1.80	1.00	N	Y	N
Varsity	1.50	1.95	1.85	1.20	0.40	Y	N	N
No Sign Bar	2.90	3.10	2.95	2.20	0.30	Y	N	Y
Village Pub	2.40	2.85	4.80	2.60	1.50	Y	N	N



## Newport

Our survey in Newport found only a small number of alcohol promotions in evidence, however the prices of individual drinks were found to be particularly low at a significant number of the 14 venues. In Reflex on High Street for example, the cheapest pint of lager was on sale for £1.75, 5p less than the cheapest available non-alcoholic drink offered (330ml glass of cola). Similarly, customers who purchased two glasses wine at the Breeze Club on Cambrian Drive were offered the rest of the bottle for free.

Three venues were offering double measures of spirits (50ml) for just £1. A double measure equates to approximately two units of alcohol; therefore women were potentially able to consume twice their daily recommended amount - the usual definition of a binge - for only £3, and men able to binge for £4.

Targeted promotions were also available. For example, university students visiting Reflex on a Wednesday evening would find drinks at £1 'all night long'. Escapade offered 'Fundamental' night each Friday, where customers were invited to 'go mental' for £10 all inclusive. Likewise, Fire and Ice offered an all-inclusive night on Fridays, followed by a night-long three-for-one deal on Saturdays for all drinks excluding cocktails. In addition, often the drinks themselves were found to be branded: for example, shots were named 'shooters', 'iced nipple' or 'slimers'.

One positive is that the survey found that all venues had at least one sensible drinking message visible to the surveyors, either in the toilets, behind the bars or on windows/walls.

**Newport summary table:**

Venue	Cheapest pint £	Cheapest bottle beer £	Cheapest glass of wine £	Cheapest shot of spirits £	Cheapest soft drink £	Discount / promotion on alcohol drinks?	Discount / promotion on non-alcoholic drinks?	Sensible drinking messages visible?
The Breeze Club	1.99	1.90	3.20	1.00	1.50	Y	N	Y
Thru the Arch Club	1.99	1.90	3.20	1.00	1.50	N	N	Y
Reflex	1.75	1.90	4.80	1.50	1.80	N	N	Y
Escapade	2.80	2.00	3.50	2.50	2.00	N	N	Y
Eternity	2.15	2.20	3.25	2.50	1.90	N	N	Y
Windsor Castle	2.50	1.90	3.50	1.50	1.90	N	N	Y
The Page	1.90	1.80	3.20	1.00	1.50	Y	N	Y
Greyhound	1.99	2.59	3.79	1.80	1.80	N	N	Y
Ye Olde Murenger	1.99	2.00	3.20	1.80	1.60	N	N	Y
Newbridge Hotel	1.99	1.80	3.20	1.50	1.50	N	N	Y
The Red Lion	1.99	1.90	3.20	1.50	1.50	N	N	Y
The Lamb	2.80	1.90	3.20	2.30	1.90	N	N	Y
John Wallace Linton	1.79	1.99	3.79	3.79	1.90	N	N	Y
The Potter	1.99	2.20	3.20	1.80	1.80	N	Y	Y

## Wrexham

In Wrexham, six of the eight (75%) venues included in our survey were found to be offering some type of discount on the purchase of alcohol, yet none of these were offering promoted discounts on non-alcoholic beverages.

Pints of Bass lager at the Golden Lion on High Street were available for £1. At four of the venues (50%) shots of spirits could be purchased for just £1. One such venue was the Groove Club on

Brooke Street, which was also promoting two-for-one and three-for-one deals on Saturdays and Thursdays respectively. At the Nag's Head, three-for-one beer platters, buy two glasses of wine and get the rest of the bottle free, and double measures of spirits for £1 extra deals were all available. A similar 'double up for £1' deal on shots of spirits was offered at Lloyd's No. 1 bar.

Finally, our survey found no visible 'sensible drinking' messages at five of the eight venues (63%).

### Wrexham summary table:

Venue	Cheapest pint £	Cheapest bottle beer £	Cheapest glass of wine £	Cheapest shot of spirits £	Cheapest soft drink £	Discount / promotion on alcohol drinks?	Discount / promotion on non-alcoholic drinks?	Sensible drinking messages visible?
Ironworks	2.15	1.99	1.99	1.00	1.50	Y	N	N
Lloyd's No. 1	1.49	1.39	1.49	1.50	1.49	Y	N	N
One to Five	2.80	1.95	2.50	1.00	1.65	Y	N	Y
Honky Tonks	2.05	1.50	2.50	1.00	1.50	Y	N	N
Groove Club	2.00	2.80	2.60	1.00	1.00	Y	N	N
Nag's Head	2.20	3.02	2.40	1.88	0.61	Y	N	N
Wynnstay Arms	2.45	1.80	2.85	1.78	1.46	Y	N	Y
Golden Lion	1.00	1.50	2.95	1.50	1.00	Y	N	Y

# Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, around half of the venues we surveyed were offering some form of promotion on alcoholic beverages. It is clear that irresponsible promotions, incentivising increased consumption, are common within the night-time economy and are not restricted to a small minority of licensed premises. Our survey found many 'two-for-one' and 'three-for-one' promotions and 'all-inclusive' offers where a potentially limitless amount of alcohol is available for a single fee. This contrasts sharply with a considerably smaller number of promotions on offer for non-alcoholic beverages; indeed alcohol was sometimes found to be less costly to purchase than the cheapest available soft drink.

It is likely that these findings are applicable to towns and cities throughout England and Wales, especially given that a number of promotions were offered by venues that are part of UK-wide chains with nationwide pricing and marketing policies.

High levels of alcohol-related violence in the night-time economy have been highlighted in this report, as well as some positive initiatives in Wales that aim to tackle this. Many people enjoy safe, incident-free nights out whilst consuming alcohol. Moreover, there are obvious benefits to urban regeneration and the development of night-time leisure activities. However, this must be balanced with recognising and addressing the wider public health implications that the widespread availability of cheap alcohol brings.

Typically where there are high levels of binge-drinking, there are corresponding high levels of alcohol-related health problems. People who regularly drink above recommended guidelines are at much greater risk of developing long-term health problems, including liver disease and mouth, food pipe, bowel and breast cancer.<sup>32</sup> Cheap alcohol and irresponsible promotions in the night-time economy that incentivise greater levels of consumption therefore may not only

potentially fuel incidents of alcohol-related crime and personal injury, creating town and city centres that for 45% of adults in Wales have become 'no-go' areas, but also equally importantly, increase harm to public health.

In Swansea's Morriston Hospital, for example, it has been estimated alcohol now accounts for 10% of all admissions to its casualty department, a figure which rises to 40-50% at weekends.<sup>33</sup> Swansea's two major hospitals, Morriston and Singleton, between them admitted 6,925 alcohol-related emergency cases in the period 2002-2008. Similarly, at Wrexham Maelor over the same period there were 4,105 admissions, whilst the Royal Gwent Hospital at Newport had 5,828 admissions, the highest figure for any single accident and emergency unit in Wales.<sup>34</sup>

The drinks industry launched their Campaign for Smarter Drinking in 2009, aimed at curbing binge-drinking in young adults. Its chosen message is 'Why let the good times go bad?' However, this campaign is entirely voluntary, meaning those declining to take part are not penalised. 40% of the establishments included in our survey were found to have no visible sensible drinking messages (such as 'drink responsibly', 'know your limits' and 'don't drink and drive' messages) displayed. This is especially disappointing given that at least some of these establishments were also promoting alcohol at heavily discounted prices. It can also be argued that messages encouraging consumers to drink 'responsibly' are too subjective, as they will mean different things to different people. Mandatory point of sale information is required, providing consumers with specific unit and health information. Clearly there is a need for changes to legislation, rather than continuing to rely on the goodwill of the drinks industry in order to effectively communicate consistent and appropriate health information to the public.



The Home Office's mandatory code of practice, planned to be introduced from April 2010, will restrict some but not all of these irresponsible promotions. Alcohol Concern is broadly supportive of the code, given the continued failure of the drinks industry to regulate itself effectively, but urges that it should be further tightened to restrict promotions of all types that encourage excessive consumption.

Of course, the advent of cheap alcohol and deep-discounting in the off-trade, particularly supermarkets, has meant that the on-trade has to some extent been forced to reduce its prices in order to compete. Alcohol Concern recognises that the banning of irresponsible promotions in the on-trade only will be of limited effectiveness and may actually encourage more home-drinking pre-nightlife<sup>55</sup> unless accompanied by measures that specifically target the sale of cheap alcohol in the off-trade, in particular the implementation of a minimum price of 50p per unit.

Without significant and bold changes, individuals and society will continue to count the cost of irresponsible promotions and excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol Concern therefore makes the following specific recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1**

In recognition of the growth of alcohol misuse as a public health issue, and in order to enable licensing authorities to properly address this issue, the protection and improvement of public health needs to be established as a fifth objective within the Licensing Act 2003. Amending the Act to take account of harmful drinking levels within local communities and associated levels of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality will add substantial momentum to efforts to reduce these harms.

### **Recommendation 2**

Alcohol Concern's survey has found irresponsible alcohol promotions that may incentivise greater consumption to be highly prevalent in the night-time economy. Further tightening of the Home Office's mandatory code of practice is therefore required, in order to effectively restrict promotions of all types that encourage excessive consumption. This will have the effect of reducing alcohol-related crime and disorder and harm to public health, whilst also encouraging premises to compete on the basis of criteria such as facilities, entertainment and atmosphere, rather than on price.



### **Recommendation 3**

Given that any further restrictions on the on-trade may simply lead to an increase in off-trade sales, potentially resulting in increased home-drinking, a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol needs to be implemented in both the on-trade and off-trade across England and Wales. This would eliminate some of the most irresponsible promotions, including the end of deep-discounting at supermarkets and off-licenses, whilst having very little effect on the cost of drinking for moderate drinkers. Research shows that a minimum 50p per unit would mean an increase in cost of only 23p per week for moderate drinkers, but could bring savings in healthcare costs of £1.37 billion over 10 years. In Wales, this would equate to savings of £79 million over 10 years.

### **Recommendation 5**

If significant progress cannot soon be made in tackling irresponsible alcohol promotions across England and Wales and establishing a minimum price per unit, Alcohol Concern supports moves to devolve the necessary powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

### **Recommendation 4**

Current voluntary arrangements are failing to ensure that adequate unit and health information is clearly displayed at points of sale. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) should lobby the government in Westminster to establish a levy from the drinks industry to pass onto a wholly independent health promotion body. This body, answerable to the WAG, the Department of Health and the Home Office, should create the health and awareness messages and campaigns that consumers need to see. The industry should be mandated to carry these health and unit information messages on all of its products and wherever alcohol is sold. This will help raise unit literacy amongst consumers and provide them with consistent advice about safe levels of drinking, helping to change the culture of drinking to get drunk.

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# Counting the Cost

Irresponsible alcohol promotions in the  
night-time economy in Wales

Alcohol Concern, 64 Leman Street,  
London, E1 8EU.

Tel: 020 7264 0510

Fax: 020 7488 9213

Email: [contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk](mailto:contact@alcoholconcern.org.uk)

Website: [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

Alcohol Concern Cymru, Sophia House,  
28 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2066 0248

Fax: 029 2066 0249

Email: [acwales@alcoholconcern.org.uk](mailto:acwales@alcoholconcern.org.uk)

Website: [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)



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