

Building an evidence-based approach for advocating for mandatory alcohol labelling

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Background - labelling

- There is no requirement in the UK for alcoholic drinks to display health messages. We currently only rely on guidance from UK Government and industry:



- This is in stark contrast to the mandatory labelling requirements for all other food and drink products, which are independently regulated.

Background - alcohol awareness

Low levels of public awareness of health risks of drinking:

- < 1 in 4 people know the UK weekly drinking guideline (*regular drinkers should not drink more than 14 units per week to keep their health risks low*)
- < Half of people know that alcohol causes cancer

Lack of understanding of units and contribution to diet:

- 80%+ of drinkers could not correctly identify the number of servings of their drink that make up 14 units (11.2 grams)
- 80%+ of people don't know the calorie content of common drinks



Building the evidence

To demonstrate evidence of the problem:

✓ **Reviews of alcohol labels**

- *With partners in the UK Alcohol Health Alliance*
- *In 2022, review of over 350 alcohol products found that most did not display health warning, ingredients, nutrition information, and a third still did not display drinking guidelines*

✓ **Public polling**

- *Standalone or jointly with partners (UK Alcohol Health Alliance, NCD Alliance Scotland)*
- *Poor awareness of health risks, unit and calorie content of drinks, and of drinking guidelines*



Building the evidence

To evidence impact of, and public support for, proposed solutions:

✓ Supported PhD research on packaging and labelling (2019)

- *How young adult drinkers perceive and interact with alcohol labelling and how labelling could be used to communicate health information*
- *Participants felt that current messaging was purposefully ineffective, and supported prominent and clear health information and messages on labels*

✓ Commissioned rapid literature review (2020)

- *Impact of health messaging and product information on packaging of unhealthy products*
- *Improved labelling could increase awareness levels and may even contribute to reduced consumption*

ADDICTION RESEARCH & THEORY
2021, VOL. 29, NO. 6, 469–478
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16066359.2021.1884229>



RESEARCH PAPER

OPEN ACCESS

Health information, messaging and warnings on alcohol packaging: a focus group study with young adult drinkers in Scotland

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DRUGS: EDUCATION, PREVENTION AND POLICY
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687637.2021.1932754>



REVIEW

OPEN ACCESS

Rapid literature review on the impact of health messaging and product information on alcohol labelling

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Advocating for mandatory labelling

✓ Consultations

- *European Commission consultations in 2021 and 2022*
- *UK Government consultation on alcohol labelling expected now*
- *Scottish Government alcohol marketing consultation in 2022*

✓ Influencing decision-makers

- *Labelling as a key manifesto commitment for the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections*
- *Regular meetings with civil servants and Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs)*
- *Evidence to Scottish Parliament committee*
- *Presentation to Food Standards Scotland board*

✓ Reports

- *Alcohol Marketing Expert Network report published in 2022*
- *Report on nutritional analysis and labelling of wine products to be published this year*


Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Tuesday 01 March 2022 9:40 AM



Outcomes so far

- Both UK and Scottish Governments have now made commitments to consider mandatory labelling requirements
- Political interest in alcohol labelling in Scottish and UK Parliaments
- Strong partner relationships across unhealthy commodities to continue advocating for change



Creatively blending different forms of evidence and advocacy can help build the case for public health action

Thank you

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