Many of us drink alcohol, but there is another side to drinking and that is the harm generated from the way we drink and the amount we drink. The effects of that harm go beyond the individual who is drinking, to impact on families, communities, schools, hospitals and businesses.

Our work involves providing information on alcohol-related issues, creating awareness of alcohol-related harm and offering policy solutions with the potential to reduce that harm, with a particular emphasis on the implementation of the recommendations of the Steering Group report on the National Substance Misuse Strategy.

“In addition to making changes to pricing and availability in order to apply a brake on Ireland’s runaway drinking, we must also take our foot off the accelerator, and alcohol promotion, via advertising and sponsorship is that accelerator.”

Dr Bobby Smyth, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and Board Member of Alcohol Action Ireland.

What we believe

We are not anti-alcohol, but we are “anti” the harm it causes to children, families, communities and businesses, which is why we take what is known as a “public health approach” to alcohol-related harm.

What this means in reality is that we focus on evidence-based policies that will deliver the widest benefits to the greatest number of people within the population, particularly those which target the key areas of alcohol pricing, marketing and availability.

We want alcohol, as a substance with the capacity to alter mood and create dependence, to be treated with the respect it deserves and that means ceasing to treat it as an ordinary grocery item.

We believe that the Government has a pivotal role to play in putting in place policies to reduce alcohol-related harm, with the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill representing the important first step in this regard.

The measures proposed for inclusion in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill are drawn from the Steering Group Report on the National Substance Misuse Strategy, which was published in February 2012 and provides a blueprint for changing our harmful relationship with alcohol.

We are aware that what we are striving to achieve will require significant change and that we cannot do it alone. To that end, Alcohol Action Ireland works with other stakeholders so that more voices are heard on the issue of alcohol-related harm, whether on a local, regional, national or European level.

Together we can stop the harm.

How we are funded

Alcohol Action Ireland is currently funded through a mix of state and non-state funding, including charitable foundations and individual donations.

To read our Governance Code see alcoholireland.ie/about/funders
① What is the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill?

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill will contain a package of measures designed to tackle our harmful relationship with alcohol, reducing alcohol consumption and the related harms.

The measures proposed for inclusion in the Bill were announced by Government in October 2013 and are based on the recommendations of the Steering Group Report on the National Substance Misuse Strategy, which was published in February 2012.

Though it may seem strange to many, particularly given the high-profile nature of our harmful relationship with alcohol, this marks the first time that alcohol misuse has been addressed as a public health issue by an Irish Government.

To read more about the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill see alcoholireland.ie/publichealthbill

② Why is it needed?

Alcohol-related harm in Ireland currently claims three lives a day and costs the State an estimated €3.7 billion annually, putting a particular strain on our already overburdened health services, where 2,000 beds are occupied by people with alcohol-related illnesses every day.

Alcohol also plays a major role in a wide range of other very serious issues for Irish society, such as crime, suicide, self-harm and child welfare. The harm that is caused by our drinking extends far beyond the individual who is drinking, to impact on families, communities, schools, hospitals and businesses throughout Ireland.

At an individual level, the majority of Irish drinkers are still drinking in a harmful manner. Our annual consumption is 11.7 litres of pure alcohol per person, aged 15 and over, (which equates to a bottle of vodka each week), a situation that is exacerbated by our unhealthy drinking patterns, particularly the prevalence of binge drinking.

To find out more about alcohol-related harm in Ireland see alcoholireland.ie/facts

③ What will the Bill contain?

The measures proposed for inclusion in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, brought forward by Minister Alex White and the Department of Health, address the key areas of alcohol-harm reduction, including the pricing, marketing and availability of alcohol.

Among other measures, the bill will provide for:
• The introduction of minimum pricing
• Regulation of the marketing and advertising of alcohol
• Health labelling of alcohol products
• Enforcement powers to be given to Environmental Health Officers in relation to sale, supply and consumption of alcohol products

For detailed information on the measures proposed see alcoholireland.ie/measures

④ What can you do?

The proposed measures do not yet include important aspects of the Steering Group Report recommendations, such as a ban on alcohol sponsorship of sports (which is to be further examined by an inter-departmental working group and the commencement of Section 9, of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008, which would ensure the structural separation of alcohol from other goods in mixed retails outlets, such as supermarkets. We will continue to campaign for the introduction of these critical measures.

However, even those measures which are proposed to be introduced as part of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, such as minimum pricing, are by no means guaranteed and our politicians are subject to intense lobbying by the alcohol industry, which will use all its financial power — and the influence which that affords it — to resist all public health measures that would reduce alcohol consumption and, therefore, represent a threat to its profits.

We would greatly appreciate your support for the campaign to introduce evidence-based policies that will significantly reduce the burden of alcohol-related harm on our society, improving health, safety and wellbeing for all.

To find out more about what we do and how you can get involved contact us on 01 878 0610 or admin@alcoholactionireland.ie. For further information see alcoholirsweland.ie or follow us on Twitter or Facebook, where you’ll also find all the latest alcohol-related news and policy developments.

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