Building a HEALTHIER SOCIETY
How doctors and civil society can shape public policy

The Alcohol Health Alliance was established in March 2015 by Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI) and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) to campaign for the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015. This legislation was the culmination of research findings and recommendations on the best way to reduce the burden of alcohol-related harm in Irish society. The legislation is supported by a range of individuals, agencies, NGOs and health campaigners who see firsthand the impact of alcohol harm on children, families, communities and the healthcare system.

The Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland is chaired by Prof Frank Murray, President of RCPI, chair of the RCP Policy Group on Alcohol, and a liver specialist at Beaumont Hospital. To date the Alliance has over 50 member organisations.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill contains a range of measures designed to tackle our harmful relationship with alcohol. The key measures are:

Minimum Unit Pricing: Minimum unit pricing (MUP) is a ‘floor price’ beneath which alcohol cannot legally be sold and is based on the amount of pure alcohol in a product, measured in grams. One standard drink is 10 grams of alcohol and the Bill provides for an MUP of €1 per standard drink.

MUP is a targeted measure, designed to stop strong alcohol being sold at very low prices in the off-trade, particularly supermarkets, where alcohol is frequently used as a ‘loss leader’ and sold below cost.

Structure Separation: The provision for structural separation of alcohol products in mixed retail outlets, such as supermarkets and convenience stores, will mean that alcohol will no longer be displayed like ‘every day’ or ‘ordinary’ products, such as bread or milk.

Advertising and Sponsorship: The legislation contains a number of important regulations that will reduce children’s exposure to alcohol marketing and move us away from many of the existing systems of industry self-regulation and voluntary codes, which have proved completely ineffective and are without meaningful sanction.

Labelling: For the first time health warnings to inform the public of the danger of alcohol consumption will be displayed on alcohol products as well as information on caloric content.

The AHA adheres to World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations that “the alcohol industry has no role in the formulation of alcohol policies, which must be protected from distortion by commercial or vested interests” and Health Service Executive (HSE) guidance that “there is an inherent conflict associated with the alcohol industry playing a role in providing public health advice”. We therefore do not work with the alcohol industry or its funded groups.

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland harnesses expertise and knowledge of senior medical doctors and other health professionals through a number of policy groups. Representation is sought from a range of medical specialties, other healthcare professionals and groups engaged in health advocacy and research. The aim is to influence public debate and national policy on major national public health issues, such as alcohol, obesity, smoking, physical activity, ageing.

Alcohol Action Ireland is the national charity for alcohol-related issues. We are an independent voice for advocacy and policy change, working to reduce levels of alcohol harm in Ireland and improve public health, safety and wellbeing. We campaign for the burden of alcohol harm to be lifted from the individual, community and State, and have a strong track record in campaigning, advocacy, research and information provision.

How the AHA works:

The AHA is guided by a steering group who makes decisions regarding the activities of the alliance. The AHA welcomes membership from individual members of the public, public health campaigners including medical professionals, NGOs and charities who:

• Are committed to working in constructive partnership with other organisations who share this goal
• Are committed to highlighting the rising levels of alcohol-related health harm, proposing evidence based solutions to reduce this harm, and influencing decision makers to take positive action to address the damage caused by alcohol misuse
• Do not receive direct or indirect funding from the alcohol industry

If you are interested in getting involved and joining the alliance please visit our website for further details: www.alcoholireland.ie/campaigns/aha/