



Health and Sport Committee
Alcohol (Licensing, Public Health and Criminal Justice) (Scotland) Bill

Written evidence from YouthLink Scotland

June 2015

Introduction

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Health and Sport Committee's call for evidence on the Alcohol (Licensing, Public Health and Criminal Justice) (Scotland) Bill. We are providing evidence which supports the introduction of this Bill and making suggestions for aspects of additional consideration by the committee.

Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland (2014) states: "Working together we can create a virtuous cycle of improvement to break the cycle of inequality and improve life chances of young people. We are committed to break this cycle and ensure that all young people have opportunities which will improve their life chances."¹ It is our view that this Bill contributes to the improved life chances of young people.

Background to YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of both the voluntary and statutory sector. YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people.

Our vision is of a youth work sector for Scotland that offers sustainable, dynamic and accessible youth work opportunities that support young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens.

Support for the Bill

YouthLink Scotland supports the introduction of this Bill. We share the concerns of the Scottish Parliament with regards to our country's relationship with alcohol, and we are of course particularly concerned by how this impacts on our children and young people. We would have made this response within the two realities for young people – firstly as the vulnerable/at risk consumers of alcohol; and secondly as the vulnerable/at risk group affected by other people's alcohol consumption. Alcohol Focus Scotland² have found that 1 in 2 children and young people have been negatively affected by another person's drinking; and 51,000 children and young people are living with a parent who has an alcohol problem. It is for these reasons that we consider young people as

¹ YouthLink Scotland, Education Scotland, Scottish Government (2014) *Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland*. Edinburgh

² www.adamresource.org.uk

key contributors to addressing Scotland's relationship with alcohol and accordingly we have made suggestions for aspects of additional consideration by the committee on the following areas:

Part 1: Chapter 1 – Alcohol Licensing

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the consideration given to the wellbeing and protection of young people in the measures included in this Chapter of the Bill.

Alcoholic Drinks Containing Caffeine

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the inclusion of legislation on the prohibition of pre-packaged alcoholic drinks with excessive caffeine content. We believe that this will result in positive health benefits for young people as potential consumers of such products; we also believe that this will protect children and young people from the harm which may be caused by other people who consume such products. We welcome the inclusion in the Policy Memorandum which details the impact of these products on risk taking behaviour, consumption levels, and as a contributing factor to criminal activities. The prohibition of tonic wine has a social and cultural benefit; this would significantly contribute to an improved image and perception of young people, allowing future generations of children and young people to grow up free from association to the 'buckfast/ned' culture.

Age Discrimination: Off Sales

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the consideration given to remove the powers of local licensing to discriminate against any specific age or group. We share the view of the Member that the inclusion of this section of the Bill redresses a matter of equality, respect and responsibility for young adults. We support the participation of licensees in voluntary age-challenge schemes which seek to address underage purchase and consumption of alcohol.

Container Marking: Off Sales

YouthLink Scotland welcomes this additional power for Local Licensing Boards to impose container marking as a tool in tackling underage purchase and consumption of alcohol. It is our view that this tool, when working amongst a range of wider measures, including alcohol education and partnership work between youth services, police and health boards, is a useful one. This measure has the potential to address the issue of supply (including proxy sales) by making retailers more accountable for their actions and responsibilities as a licensee. We would support this power to be legislated, as this would ensure enforcement and cooperation by statutory bodies, namely Police Scotland or local authority community wardens.

Applications for, or to vary, premises licence: consultation and publicity

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the consideration given within the Bill to widen participation of community members to contribute to the consultation on license applications. We believe in the importance and the right of children and young people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives, as enshrined within article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For this reason we would request that the committee give consideration as to an appropriate

method for the involvement of children and young people in local licensing plans – for example through the inclusion of youth forum or school councils as consultees.

Part 1: Chapter 2 – Restrictions on Advertising of Alcohol

Advertising near premises used by children

YouthLink Scotland supports the inclusion of named areas where alcohol advertising is restricted – we would like the committee to give consideration to the inclusion of youth and community centres as venues where this advertising restriction applies.

Advertising at sporting and cultural events

YouthLink Scotland would bring to the attention of the committee the need for further consideration on this matter – as children and youth sporting or cultural events may take place at venues which are sponsored by alcohol companies – an example of this may include inter-school competitions where the finals are held at national stadiums, or youth sports groups training at community venues which display advertising hoardings by alcohol companies; or children’s theatre performances at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. We would urge the committee to consider the implications and practicalities of this inclusion in the legislation as we would not want to deny children and young people of the rich and reward experience of participating in sporting and cultural events at prestigious venues.

Alcohol Education Policy Statement

YouthLink Scotland considers that the inclusion of an obligation on Scottish Ministers to publish an alcohol education policy statement to be a very welcome measure in the strategic coordination of public health and safety information for all of Scotland’s communities. We would urge the committee to consider the role of other bodies in the production of such a statement: namely the third sector, local communities, and young people as influencers in the development and monitoring of this policy statement – and to commit to the ambition of our national youth work strategy which puts young people at the heart of policy.

Part 2: Offences etc. Involving Alcohol

YouthLink Scotland is a key partner in Cashback for Communities. We understand the relationship between alcohol, crime and poverty. It is for this reason that we believe that youth work is an excellent model of prevention in the areas highest levels of inequality. We are interested in the proposal of the Bill to further pilot Fixed Penalty Offences involving alcohol and alcohol awareness training as alternative to fixed penalty. We would see a role for the youth work sector in supporting these pilots and of course to ensuring that young people are informed of the consequences of their actions should they engage in low level nuisance offences which are committed under the influence of alcohol from the age of 16.

Closing Remarks

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the introduction of this Bill and in our evidence we make suggestions which would increase the participation of communities, and in particular young people in these

policy objectives. This Bill is a necessary tool in our nation's continued efforts to address the relationships with alcohol, and includes measures which will promote and protect the wellbeing of young people from harm.

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