

HIPS/18/57 - The Impact of Minimum Pricing of Alcohol on Ambulance Callouts in Scotland (IMPAACT)

This study will be the first to determine whether increasing the price of cheap alcohol affects ambulance call-outs and to examine in-depth the impact of alcohol on a public ambulance service. Ambulance call-outs due to alcohol cost ~£52 million annually in Scotland (York Health Economics Consortium 2010). Under the Scottish Government's (SG) world-first 'Minimum Unit Pricing' (MUP) policy, the cheapest alcoholic drinks became more expensive from 1st May 2018. Research suggests that this will reduce drinking especially in heavier drinkers from deprived backgrounds, and should reduce ambulance call-outs, but the actual impact of price changes on call-outs has not previously been studied. Objectives: (1) Using detailed data from the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), we will identify alcohol-related ambulance call-outs and examine statistically if MUP had an impact on the number of call-outs, including in different groups (varying by sex/age/wealth). (2) Using indepth interviews with ambulance staff, we will explore how they experience, identify, handle and record alcohol-related call-outs. The findings will: help the Scottish Parliament who must decide in 2024 if enough evidence exists of benefits from MUP to continue it beyond that date; inform wider alcohol policy; and support SAS with planning and training staff for future alcohol-related incidents.