Reviewer's report

Title: A minimum price per unit of alcohol: A focus group study to investigate public opinion concerning UK government proposals to introduce of new price controls to curb alcohol consumption

Version: 3 Date: 3 May 2012

Reviewer: John Holmes

Reviewer's report:

This is a much-improved version of the paper and the majority of my concerns have been addressed. I would suggest no further major revisions but would recommend the following changes:

Minor Essential Revisions:

p5: A 25ml shot of spirits contains 1 unit but 1 unit is 10ml of pure alcohol

p6. Consumption reductions from Sheffield modelling are for minimum pricing + an off-trade discount ban. This should be noted or preferably amended to the figures for minimum pricing alone. It should also be noted that these are figures for Scotland.

p6. The £9.7bn figure is for England I believe and again this should be noted. In both cases, the reports on which these figures are based are different to those cited as Refs 10 & 18 and the correct refs should be used alongside quoted figures.

p7. Neither the Scottish or English governments have proposed a figure for the minimum price in their most recent policies.

p10. Young binge drinkers do not generally drink cheap alcohol as they primarily purchase in the on-trade where prices are higher. Sheffield's model demonstrates this by the relatively small impact of minimum pricing on 18-24 year old hazardous drinkers compared to other hazardous drinkers. I appreciate that this was the information given to participants and I acknowledge the government has also presented minimum pricing as a solution to binge drinking but some acknowledgement of this incorrect provision of information to the participants should be made and reflection given on the impact it may have had on the results. If participants are told beer won't be sold for less than £1 a pint, they are understandably going to conclude it will have no impact on binge drinking in pubs selling beer at £3 a pint.

p32. I disagree with the recommendation to raise public awareness of the damaging effects of binge drinking as a means to improve the acceptability of minimum pricing. Minimum pricing's primary affect is on off-trade alcohol and overall levels of consumption. Higher levels of, largely off-trade, consumption in 'not-young' people is also where the largest burden of health harms is coming from - not youth binge drinking. Some recognition of this should be in the paper
at some point and reflected in policy recommendations in the discussion.

Discretionary Revisions:
p32. The authors make a good point about the need for educational campaigns as a key finding was the low levels of understanding around minimum pricing and this appears to be a key policy recommendation. I feel it could be more strongly stated in the discussion perhaps with a little extra reflection to highlight the misunderstandings.

Discussion/Conclusions: The discussion has been rewritten and conveys important information. However, the conclusion seems to repeat much of this and, in my view, could be greatly shortened to concisely state the key messages.

**Level of interest:** A article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests