



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

Note of Informal Stakeholder Event on Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill: Young Person's Event

Tuesday 9 March 2021 18:30 to 20:30pm
Remote Access via Zoom

Present: Zoom

Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Andy Allen MBE MLA
Sinéad Ennis MLA
Karen Mullen MLA

Stakeholders: Zoom

Representatives nominated by:

NI Football Association, NICCY, Antrim Grammar, a Hockey Society, a Dance Academy,
Girlguiding, Co-operation Ireland, Youth Action and VOYPIC.

In Attendance:

Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)
Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Supervisor)
Eleanor Murphy (Research Officer)
Louise Close (Engagement)
Karin McKinty (Engagement)
Michelle Carson (Engagement)
Anne-Marie Fleming (Education Officer)
Marina McConville (Education Officer)

The Committee agreed at its meeting on 18 February 2021, to hold a virtual stakeholder event to gauge young people's opinion on the Clauses in the Bill that have a direct impact on young people under 18 years of age.

The Clerk provided a brief overview of the Bill and advised that the Bill contained a number of proposals **that would affect anyone under the age of 18:**

- **underage functions** - the attendance of under 18s at functions in registered clubs and licensed premises;
- **private functions** - the attendance of under 18s at private birthday parties, wedding receptions etc.); held in registered clubs and licensed premises;
- **young people in sporting clubs;**
- **delivery of alcohol** to people under the age of 18; and
- **restriction of alcohol advertising.**

The young people split into small groups to share their views on the relevant elements of the Bill. The groups were then brought back into a central virtual space for a feedback session which Members had been invited to attend.

1. Attendance of under 18s at underage functions in registered clubs and licensed premises (Clauses 11 and 27).

Positives

- Safer for young people to remain in one venue, help prevent them going on to alternative venues and less controlled house-parties etc. after 9/9.30pm.
- May limit damage to venues and anti-social behaviour triggered by alcohol.
- Removal of all gambling machines a positive step to the prevent entry level gambling habits.

Negatives

- Young People pre-loading with alcohol prior to an event.
- Smuggling alcohol into an event.
- Formal/event - alcohol not a major factor – post-event parties – move to venues where alcohol is available.
- Loss of revenue for venues, no alcohol sales.

2. Attendance of under 18s at private functions in licensed premises and registered clubs (Clauses 12 and 28)

Positives

- Meal is a positive step, enable children and young people to attend family events/celebrations.
- Good for the venue, additional revenue from catering.
- Sets clear times that young people can remain in a venue.

- Exposure to drinking in a family setting is a much safer than other options open to young people.

Negatives

- Concerns over the cost to provide a meal, in particular if it is a large family event.
- Disadvantage to venues (e.g. some smaller clubs) that don't have the facilities to provide a main meal.

3. Young people in Sports Clubs (Clause 29)

Positives

- Additional funding stream for clubs – able to host birthday parties etc.

Negatives

- Summer months far too restrictive, does not suit all sports – need to extend the period - possibility of all year round access.
- 1 award ceremony evening attendance is not feasible as young people participate in a range of sports or a number of teams, including those like kickboxing that host more than one awards ceremony per year.
- Not inclusive, younger players still have to leave earlier than older players.
- No real change, young people currently only remain in a club bar until a certain time before moving on to another venue to continue with their evening.
- If underage functions are closed to the public in licensed premises such as a hotel - does that mean in a club the same would be true? For example, if a sports club only has one bar and function space would this mean that club members would be excluded from using the facilities when a private event is taking place?

4. The delivery of alcohol to under 18s (Clause 13)

Positives

- Good to have restrictions in place to bring into line with current existing laws for over the counter sales.
- Example provided of the sale of vaping devices via Amazon, parents required to sign upon delivery.

Negatives

- Will not have much impact as there are many other means for young people to access to alcohol:

- At home, parent's alcohol
 - Older sibling or adult purchasing alcohol for young person
 - Dial a drink and other unlicensed premises that provide under counter sales
- Negative impact on younger delivery staff not being able to deliver alcohol.
 - What will happen about 'online clubs' e.g. gin clubs and craft beer clubs that post out directly to homes.

5. Restriction of alcohol advertising (Clause 16)

Positives

- Might assist in preventing younger children becoming aware of alcohol at an earlier age.

Negatives

- No impact on young people, advertising as a whole has no influence on young people choosing to buy and consume alcohol. Young people more influenced by what their friends are drinking.
- Disadvantage to smaller stores rather than major retailers.
- Does not go far enough in controlling alcohol as majority of major sporting events are sponsored by alcohol producers, the 6 Nations and the Heineken Cup etc.
- Television, media only show the glamorous side of drinking not the reality.

Final Group Discussions

Overall the groups felt that changes would have little impact on young people's ability to access alcohol or their desire to drink alcohol.

The groups felt that the dangers of excess alcohol should be empathised more, whether in the school environment, through the media or via a comprehensive Public Health campaign.

Fewer young people today smoke than 20 years ago and the young people believe that this is due to their comprehensive knowledge of the dangers of smoking with hard-hitting public health campaigns - similar campaigns for alcohol are needed.

The groups felt that staff in venues needed better training particularly in identifying fake identification.

Additional future ID safeguards such as QR codes received a mixed response and although many in the groups felt it was a good option others felt it was too invasive.