



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Our Ref: CSD/017/2011/NS

Ms Margaret Sisk
Department for Social Development
Lighthouse Building
1 Cromac Place
Gasworks Business Park
Ormeau Road
Belfast BT7 2JB

Dear Margaret,

Irresponsible Drinks Promotions Regulations

At its meeting on 28 June 2012, the Committee for Social Development received a briefing from the Department on the outcome of the public consultation regarding the proposed introduction of Regulations to ban certain irresponsible drinks promotions.

The Committee agreed for the Clerk to draft a response based on the comments raised during the meeting. Below is the Committee response.

Promotions involving unlimited amounts of alcohol for a fixed price.

1. It is the Committee's view that promotions which involve supplying unlimited amounts of alcohol for a fixed price are indeed irresponsible and can have potential devastating impacts on individuals and their families. The Committee therefore strongly agrees for legislation which restricts such promotions.

Promotions involving the sale of alcohol containing two or more intoxicating liquor products.

2. Whilst the Committee acknowledge that more and more people are drinking at home, it is also their view that the vast majority of people who avail of such promotions are responsible consumers of alcohol. The Committee therefore has strong concerns that restricting promotions involving the sale of two or more intoxicating liquor products would unfairly impact on these people.

3. The Committee believes that this proposal is reflective of government intrusion affecting a person's freedom of choice amounting to adherence to political correctness rather than sound legislation.

4. The Committee is of the view that not all promotions that fall into this category can be considered 'irresponsible' and would question how the Department define 'irresponsible' in the context of this proposal. The Committee does not therefore support a 'blanket' ban on such promotions and would prefer to see a more detailed and nuanced approach that distinguishes between different promotions that fall into this general category.

5. The Committee has concerns that this proposed ban could result in households being charged more for their purchase of alcohol at a time when households should be helped to save money.

6. The Committee also questions whether there is any evidence to suggest that banning the sale of alcohol containing two or more intoxicating liquor products will stop people binge drinking at home or drinking irresponsibly.

The Committee has concerns that this type of restriction would potentially lead to consumers purchasing cheaper and stronger alcohol and therefore be counter-productive to the aims of the proposal.

7. The Committee is of the general view that competition for consumers is good as it enables them to buy products which are value for money and believes that implementing such a ban is anti-competitive.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Pelan

Dr Kevin Pelan
Clerk, Committee for Social Development