

Frequently Asked Questions

Communities have a vital role to play in relation to alcohol licensing.

Q Why is alcohol an important issue for communities?

The widespread availability of alcohol makes it easy to obtain and gives the message that drinking is a normal part of everyday life. However, we need to think about the availability of alcohol in our communities in the context of it being a powerful drug with the potential for harm. For example, in Scotland:

- Every day 10 people die and over 100 people are hospitalised due to alcohol.ⁱ
- Around a quarter of adults drink more than the Chief Medical Officers' low-risk guidelines.ⁱⁱ
- Alcohol is a leading risk factor for death, disability, and ill health.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 17% of children live with a parent who drinks at harmful levels.^{iv}
- Alcohol harm costs an estimated £3.6 billion a year, including £267 million in costs to the NHS.^v

Q What is alcohol licensing?

Alcohol licensing is a system of granting permission for the sale of alcohol, it controls:

- Who can sell alcohol and where it can be sold
- The conditions of sale
- The hours and days of sale
- The number of premises permitted

Controlling the supply of alcohol is something that public authorities have done for centuries to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol.

Q Who makes licensing decisions?

Local licensing boards decide who can sell alcohol, and where and when it can be sold. There are currently 40 licensing boards across Scotland. Only elected councillors can be members of a licensing board.

Q Who else is involved?

Other people who get involved in licensing include:

- Licensing Standards Officers (LSOs)
- Police
- Health board
- Community councils
- Local licensing forum
- Members of the community
- Representatives of the licensed trade e.g., pub owners

Q How can communities have a say?

There are a number of ways that community members can have a say in licensing, for example:

- **Getting involved with the local licensing forum:** Licensing forums monitor licensing in their local area and can offer advice and recommendations to the licensing board. Licensing forums are made up of different people with an interest in licensing, including community members.
- **Inputting to the local licensing policy:** Each licensing board has to develop a policy setting out how it will carry out its work, and they should consult with representatives of the community when doing so. This process is currently underway across Scotland.
- **Raising concerns:** people can speak to a Licensing Standards Officer (LSO) if they have concerns about the way somewhere selling alcohol is running, who can then act to help sort out problems out.
- **Commenting on applications:** When a business is applying for an alcohol licence, anyone can object or comment on the application. This is a great way for people to have a say on decisions that might affect them.

Q What is the role of the Community Council?

Licensing boards are legally required to consult with community councils about specific matters relating to alcohol licensing in the local area. For example, they are obliged to notify community councils of premises licence applications, and community councils are entitled to object or make representations about them e.g., to request that conditions are attached to a licence. Licensing boards will also often seek community councils' views when they are developing their local licensing policies.

In addition, representatives from community councils are often members of local licensing forums.

Q Where can I find out more?

Alcohol Focus Scotland has developed a range of resources about alcohol and licensing which are available on our website. You can get in touch or sign up for our monthly newsletter using the details below:

✉ 166 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW

☎ 0141 572 6700

📧 enquiries@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

🌐 www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

🐦 [@alcoholfocus](https://twitter.com/alcoholfocus)

Subscribe to eFocus, AFS's monthly newsletter.

ⁱ Tod, E. et al. (2018). Hospital admissions, deaths and overall burden of disease attributable to alcohol consumption in Scotland. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland. <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/media/1597/scotpho180201-bod-alcohol-scotland.pdf>

ⁱⁱ McLean, J. & Wilson, V. (Eds.) (2020). The Scottish Health Survey 2019 Edition, Volume 1, Main Report. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2019-volume-1-main-report>

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) (2018). United Kingdom - Scotland profile. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington. <http://www.healthdata.org/united-kingdom-scotland>

^{iv} McLean, J. & Wilson, V. (Eds.) (2020). The Scottish Health Survey 2019 Edition, Volume 1, Main Report. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2019-volume-1-main-report>

^v York Health Economics Consortium, University of York (2010). The Societal Cost of Alcohol Misuse in Scotland for 2007. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research. <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170108040932/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/12/29122804/21>