



Information embargoed until 00:01 – 27 February 2008

Date: 26 February 2008

Binge for cost of sandwich must end

The British Liver Trust has today called for a debate on alcohol pricing, to end the 'pocket money prices' currently charged by some retailers, often selling cheap booze as loss-leaders.

Evidence collected by the Trust in a snapshot survey last week demonstrates that a harmful binge drink can be bought for less than the cost of a sandwich.

Alison Rogers, Chief Executive of the British Liver Trust said: "The evidence is clear that the cost of alcohol has an impact on consumption. Cost particularly affects the youngest and heaviest drinkers, who are most at risk of health damage. The Government needs to take action on cheap booze, not just through raising taxes in the forthcoming Budget, but by ending loss-leaders in supermarkets by legislating for a minimum price for sale of alcohol.

"If a retailer could sell a unit of alcohol no cheaper than say 40p or 50p, this would end the pocket-money prices that encourage excessive drinking, particularly by young people. It would have little or no effect on most social drinkers who drink in moderation and who generally pay considerably more than this minimum for their favourite tipple."

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Alcohol costs the NHS £1.7 billion a year and four people every hour are admitted to hospital with alcoholic liver disease. Liver disease is now the fifth biggest killer in the UK and the only one out of the five that is on the rise.

Ends

For further information please contact

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Editor's Note:

The British Liver Trust was founded in 1988 by a group of leading hepatologists and patients. It is Britain's only national liver disease charity for adults, existing to improve the lives of people suffering from liver disease, of which there are over 100 different forms.

The Trust's key roles are in education, support and research. It operates a comprehensive website and a helpline and distributes a wide range of information leaflets to individuals and healthcare professionals. In addition, it serves as a point of contact for support groups nationwide as well as co-ordinating funding and providing support for research.

The British Liver Trust has a significant role to play in the future health of the UK. While liver disease can be linked to genetic disorders, abnormalities in the immune system and even the medicines we take, much of the increasing incidence of liver disease stems from lifestyle trends – relating to alcohol, obesity and viral hepatitis. The Trust's most urgent priorities are to raise the profile of liver disease in line with this disturbing increase, encourage prevention, and achieve greater recognition, better support and wider understanding for all people with liver disease.