

ICAAN Opening Statement – Sale of Alcohol Bill 2022

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to present the voices of communities and evidence on this important legislation which will have a significant impact on Ireland’s social, cultural and economic well-being.

Irish Community Action on Alcohol Network

The Irish Community Action on Alcohol Network (ICAAN) was formed with support from Alcohol Forum Ireland in 2017 to advance community action on alcohol and to facilitate collective working to reduce alcohol harm. ICAAN comprises membership from Local and Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Forces, is represented on a number of national policy-making fora, and is a founder member of the World Assembly on Community Action on Alcohol. In essence, ICAAN ensures that the traditionally less heard voices, opinions and concerns of individuals, families and communities are amplified and heard in decision making processes.

Observations on the Bill

ICAAN has been active on alcohol licensing, training, advocacy and policy since 2017 when we organised a national round table discussion on alcohol licensing. We have developed a Community Guide to Alcohol Licensing, developed Ireland’s only specialised Certificate in Alcohol Licensing Law with the ATU, advocated for consolidation of the licensing code and campaigned for greater regulation of the fast-growing area of drink delivery services. We have been afforded legal expertise in this work through the Bar of Ireland’s Voluntary Assistance Scheme. Central to all our work has been the involvement of both rural and urban communities across Ireland.

ICAAN welcomed the announcement by Government that it was finally proposing to consolidate alcohol licensing, the announcement by Minister McEntee that hearing from communities would be an important part of the debate and welcomed the Departments indication that one of the objectives of the Sale of Alcohol Bill was to ‘reduce alcohol – related harm, especially among young people’¹

However, we are appearing here today because we fundamentally do not believe the Bill, in its current form, will not achieve that objective. At the end of last year, we commissioned a REDC poll on alcohol licensing which highlighted significant concerns that people have in relation to the proposals contained in this Bill.

- 51% agreed that ‘Extending the hours at which alcohol can be sold (in pubs, late bars and night clubs) will have a negative impact on public health, public safety & public order’

¹ [Sale of Alcohol Bill - The Department of Justice](#)

- 59% agreed that ‘the changes proposed to the licensing laws are very significant & there needs to be a wider public consultation to ensure the public understand what the changes will mean’
- 74% agreed that ‘it is vital that any proposed extension to the sale of alcohol licensing is accompanied by plans to put in place & fund additional services such as Gardai on patrol, ambulance services etc. which will be needed to cover the additional consumption hours’
- 65% agreed that ‘There should be stronger regulations in place for alcohol delivery services from licensed premises’ (up from 57% in a previous REDC we commissioned in 2020)
- 63% of people are concerned that unregulated online/over the phone sale of alcohol is facilitating underage drinking’ (up from 54% in 2020)

Recommendations

ICAAN fully supports the case made by our colleagues from IPH and AAI here today for a retention of the extinguishment requirement and retention of the current closing hours for both on-license premises and night clubs. The evidence is clear, deregulation and extending hours will increase harm.

We invite committee members to consider our key recommendations in relation to the Bill:

- 1) **Drink Deliveries:** Need for a clear definition of distance sales / drink deliveries, introduction of a new category of license, robust age verification requirements, specified hours for both sale and delivery and limits on volume of alcohol sold per customer, per night
- 2) **Training:** Mandatory training in responsible server and trader of alcohol for all those involved in the supply, sale and delivery of alcohol (to include delivery drivers and others involved in drink deliveries). This should be delivered by a body which is fully independent of the alcohol industry.
- 3) **Child protection:** Inclusion of a child protection objective within the licensing legislation that outlines clear regulations regarding children under 18 years on licensed premises with parents / guardians and unaccompanied minors attending events on licensed premises (even when alcohol is not being sold)

We welcome any questions that you may have in regard to these matters.