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Proposal to end the sale of energy drinks to children under 16 **BMA Cymru Wales response**

INTRODUCTION

BMA Cymru Wales is pleased to provide a response to the consultation on proposals to end the sale of energy drinks to children under 16 years old.

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

RESPONSE

BMA Cymru Wales very much welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have long advocated the need to prioritise ill-health prevention as an Association, and in broad terms would support the proposed restrictions as part of this goal.

The detrimental effect of the regular consumption of highly caffeinated drinks upon the health of younger people is well known and articulated in the consultation. This includes, but is not limited to, sleep problems, headaches, irritability and more severely, long term cardiovascular issues. A case report featured in the BMJ found that heavy energy drink consumption was linked to heart failure in a 21-year-old man who had consumed four 500ml cans of energy drink per day for the previous two years¹.

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Listed as a Trade Union under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974.



Additionally, excessive consumption of energy drinks has been linked with anxiety disorders amongst young adultsⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ; member experience of patient presentations suggests an anecdotal increase in these associations of late.

Q.1 Do you agree with the proposal to ban the sale of energy drinks to children under 16?

Yes – we support the proposal to ban the sale of energy drinks to children under the age of 16. The current voluntary restrictions put in place by many retailers have been welcome; a statutory ban will bring all retailers into line.

Q.2 Should the ban be widened to consider other drinks typically high in caffeine such as tea and coffee?

No - we do not think this would be proportionate.

Q.3 Do you agree that the ban should cover all shops, including through online environments?

Yes - this should include all environments selling energy drinks, including online retailers.

Q.4 If children are prevented from buying energy drinks from vending machines, how should this be done?

The only way to feasibly restrict sales from vending machines is to not stock such products at all. This may be difficult to enforce, but there is no other reasonable alternative with the lack of barriers in place to prohibit sales of certain items.

ⁱ Fisk G, Hammond-Haley M, D'Silva A (2021) *Energy drink-induced cardiomyopathy* BMJ Case Reports CP 2021;14:e239370.

ⁱⁱ Trapp GS, Allen K, O'Sullivan TA, Robinson M, Jacoby P, Oddy WH. (2014) *Energy drink consumption is associated with anxiety in Australian young adult males*. *Depress Anxiety*. 2014 May;31(5):420-8. doi: 10.1002/da.22175. Epub 2013 Sep 9. PMID: 24019267.

ⁱⁱⁱ Richards G, Smith AP (2014) *A Review of Energy Drinks and Mental Health, with a Focus on Stress, Anxiety, and Depression*. *J Caffeine Res*. 2016 Jun 1;6(2):49-63. doi: 10.1089/jcr.2015.0033. PMID: 27274415; PMCID: PMC4892220.