

Drink in the facts...

A few beers and a couple of large glasses of wine are often the subject of a discussion about health, but did you know that a new Licensing law has come into force this year which is designed to help protect you, and your local community from some of the more negative effects of alcohol?

The Act has taken four years to go through so you may have heard snippets about it along the way but might not have realised that it's now in force.

The Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 Act has five clear objectives which it's hoped will:

- Help prevent crime and disorder
- Enhance public safety
- Prevent public nuisance
- Protect and improve public health
- Protect children from harm

The law has been passed to help make Scotland safer as a whole, and to help you as an individual feel safer, and, if you drink alcohol, to encourage you to adopt healthier, more sociable habits.

Now that this law has come into effect you might find that you notice that alcohol is being sold differently. For example in shops and supermarkets it will be sold from designated areas as opposed to dotted around. Happy hours and promotions such as 'buy one get one free' are banned so that there is no more active enticement to drink more than you really intended. Bars must now provide customers with free tap water if requested; it'll make life a lot more economical for any designated driver who will now be able to alternate between water and other non-alcoholic drinks.

There are also new rules for off-licenses.

Highland Council (and indeed every local Council) employs a number of Licensing Standards Officers to investigate any complaints about licensed premises, and to offer general advice to the public on licensing.

Premises will each have individual Operating Plans and a Children's Policy which will outline the terms under which children and young people are allowed on the premises.

Overall, these measures have been put in place to help create a safer and healthier population.

It's useful to understand what the act will mean for you. More information is available by logging onto www.infoscotland.com/licensingact

For general information about alcohol and what's being done to promote responsible drinking for those who drink alcohol log onto www.highland-adp.org.uk, www.drinkaware.co.uk or www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

Full contact details for your local Licensing Officer in the Highlands are available on www.highland.gov.uk

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