



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Licensing and Registration of Clubs
(Amendment) Bill:
Committee Deliberations

18 March 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill: Committee Deliberations

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Paula Bradley (Chairperson)
Ms Kellie Armstrong (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Andy Allen
Mr Mark Durkan
Mr Alex Easton
Ms Sinéad Ennis
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Karen Mullan
Mr Robin Newton

Witnesses:

Ms Suzanne Breen Department for Communities
Ms Carol Reid Department for Communities

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Carol Reid and Suzanne Breen from the Department for Communities are in attendance this week. As she was last week, Claire McCanny from the Bill Office will also be available at the end of the meeting to allow the Committee to have a more in-depth discussion in closed session on any amendments that we might want to see. I remind Committee members that this is a continuation of our informal deliberations. We started this last week, and this is not the formal clause-by-clause consideration. Today, we will commence at clause 10. Are members in agreement with that?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Carol and Suzanne, you are welcome to the meeting. Members, you are all in the spotlight, and I remind you that we can hear everything going on in the background, wherever you are.

Suzanne, I ask that you provide a brief overview of the clauses as we go along. We will start with the fifth set of clauses. Members, the fifth set of clauses that we will consider are those that relate to children and young people under the age of 18. They are clauses 10, 11, 12, 13, 26, 27, 28 and 29. We will start with clauses 10 and 26, which provide for the removal of the requirement for a children's certificate etc. Suzanne, please give us a brief overview of clauses 10 and 26.

Ms Suzanne Breen (Department for Communities): The clauses remove the requirement for licensed premises and registered clubs to apply to the courts for a physical children's certificate. All the safeguards and conditions relating to under-18s on licensed premises and clubs remain the same.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thanks, Suzanne. Members, there was considerable support for the proposal to remove the need for a separate children's certificate, as the current system is bureaucratic and costly and can be replicated in the main liquor licence conditions, meaning that the PSNI will not have to check continually whether premises have a certificate in place. A number of submissions, however, highlighted the view that it is vital that the safeguards be properly enforced and monitored and that, if the requirement for a children's certificate is removed, all necessary provisions to protect children should be built into a statutory code of practice.

A number of key stakeholders highlighted the point that there should be no changes in the law that will lead to rules around children in bars being relaxed as, without appropriate restrictions, the risks of initiation into alcohol consumption and heavier drinking by young people are considerably increased, particularly through the wider role modelling of drinking. Stakeholders also said that provisions to protect children in and around licensed premises are essential, as childhood and adolescence in particular is a critical development phase.

Do members have any comments? I recall that the young people whom we heard from that evening said that they would rather be able to be around their parents and other relatives at whatever functions they might attend and witness responsible drinking, rather than witness drinking for the first time at 18 when they are out with friends in the city centre, where they see irresponsible drinking. They made lots of comments about the various issues that we will discuss in this set of clauses.

Ms Armstrong: May I get clarification on what is meant by a "responsible adult"? Who is a responsible adult would seem to be blatantly obvious and common sense, but can you confirm what it means or where it will be defined?

Ms Carol Reid (Department for Communities): I will take this one. I am just checking whether "responsible adult" is mentioned in the clauses.

Ms Armstrong: Perhaps it is not.

Ms Reid: I do not believe that it is, but I can double-check. I think that everybody agrees that it is vital that children and young people be protected from the harms of alcohol. The clauses repeal the articles that relate to the application process only for going for the children's certificate, so, as Suzanne said, all the protections remain the same. All the articles in the two Orders that refer to the parts of the bar that a child or young person can be in, the time that they can be there for, the fact that they have to be accompanied by somebody over the age of 18 — I think that that is the terminology used — and the fact that it is an offence to sell to them and to allow consumption etc all remain the same. The clauses are purely about the process for going to court, the price that licensed premises and registered clubs have to pay and the time that that takes them. This is just about cutting out the bureaucracy. There is no question of the clauses affecting the safeguards that apply.

Ms Armstrong: OK. That is fine. It means over-18s.

Ms Reid: Yes.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): If members have no further comments on clauses 10 and 26, are they content to move on?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I will move on to clauses 11 and 27. Suzanne, can you give us an overview of those clauses?

Ms Breen: Clauses 11 and 27 relate to underage functions. First, they allow courts to make an order stating that part of a premises is suitable for an underage function. A court must be satisfied that that part of the premises is structurally adapted for the purpose of holding functions, that appropriate steps have been taken to secure the safety of under-18s and that under-18s do not have access to parts of the premises that are used for the sale of alcohol. Courts will then be able to make an authorisation for a specific function. That order can specify the hours for the function, but it cannot go beyond 1.00 am. Alcohol dispensers must be out of operation, and access to other alcohol must be prevented. Over-18s are not permitted to buy or consume alcohol at the function, and no gaming machines are permitted.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Suzanne. Members, there was support here from the hospitality and hotel sector generally that the legislation should be changed to allow young people under the age of 18 into licensed premises to attend underage functions under the conditions specified. We heard that the current situation means that no function, whether it be a school formal or even a careers fair for teenagers, can be held on licensed premises, even when the bar is completely closed. The clauses were welcomed by the PSNI, as such situations have been problematic for policing in the past. The hotel sector highlighted the point that hotels offer a regulated and controlled environment for younger people and said that school formals etc are a valuable source of income for many properties, particularly over the winter months in rural areas.

On the other side of the coin, the point was highlighted to us that, as with some other clauses, clauses 11 and 27 will further the norm of alcohol consumption and the norm that functions must be on licensed premises, where alcohol is at the heart. The Committee has been encouraged to reflect on the meaning of the term "underage functions", in that they should be children's events defined by their function to celebrate and not defined by the eligibility of alcohol consumption.

Specific concerns were raised with the Committee about what might happen if the Bill proceeds as drafted. We heard that measures should be put in place to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding for under-18s are taken into account. Whether 1.00 am is an appropriate finishing time was also queried, particularly if no lower age limit is set for functions, and we were told that banded, age-related closure times could be considered. We were asked whether children will meet adults who are dispersing from other parts of the licensed premises. There were also queries about eighteenth-birthday parties, which have the potential to attract underage persons to a venue at which the bar could be open. Again, some of those issues were brought up by our young people. Do members have any further comments or questions on the clauses?

Ms Armstrong: We had a wonderful witness session with those young people. They were quite frank and took me back quite a few years to my own youth. Suzanne and Carol, some things came up that I really would like to know about. I am delighted that formals are able to go back to finishing at 1.00 am, but I have a couple of questions. We know that 18-year-olds who attend these functions — there are people at school in year 14, formerly upper sixth, who are 18 — can go into another area of a hotel or wherever the function is being held to have alcohol. It is just that they will not be allowed to bring it into the function room. Is that correct?

I also want to check something about the drinking-up time. One of the concerns that came up in the discussion with the young people was that, although the event may be over at 1.00 am, there is potential for those young people to be coming out at the same time as people who have been drinking. They did not seem to be so concerned about that, but they did want to have time in which to be collected by taxis, by parents or by whomever they were getting lifts with. I am just double-checking that, in the legislation, we will definitely be able to enable their safety. Will those young people be able to stay in a premises for a short period after the function ends at 1.00 am, or is it the case that they will need to be gone by 1.00 am?

Ms Reid: Kellie, that is a good question. The way in which it is defined at the minute is that the event has to end by 1.00 am. If you do not mind, I would like to take that one away.

Drinking-up time is for where alcohol is served. It allows people to remain on the premises, and the licence holder is not committing an offence by allowing consumption to take place outside of the hours that the premises is allowed to sell alcohol. Again applying common sense, I will say that, if an event ends at 1.00 am, it will take time for those young people to leave. If the police were to arrive on the scene to find everybody sitting around tables still enjoying music and things like that, it would be an issue, but I do not think that it would be an issue if they were found to be gathering together their things and waiting to be collected. I would still prefer to double-check that with the drafts person in case we need to put something in there, however.

If all the changes to permitted hours and drinking-up time in the Bill are made, there will effectively be a staggered closing/kicking-out time anyway. Those premises without late licences would finish serving alcohol at 11.00 pm. People would then have an hour's drinking-up time and leave at midnight. Premises with a 1.00 am finish would also have one hour's drinking-up time, and you would imagine that people would leave there any time between 1.30 am and 2.00 am. Realistically, if all those changes are made, the young people should be gone by then.

Yes, over-18s who are still at school could be attending a formal, be a guest of somebody who is attending a formal or even be a chaperone. They could go to another part of the premises to consume

alcohol, but it would be illegal for them to consume alcohol where the event is taking place. It would also be illegal for the licence holder to allow that consumption. It would therefore be the licence holder's responsibility to make sure that that did not happen.

Ms Armstrong: May I double-check something else? If it is an offence for an over-18 to consume alcohol in the function room, will the fine apply to the 18-year-old? He or she would be an adult in that function area. Would the fine be issued against him or her or against the venue owner?

Ms Reid: I believe that it would be against both.

Yes, the clauses state that a licence holder or registered club must not:

"permit a person aged 18 or over to consume intoxicating liquor".

Sorry, I am just checking this quickly. Yes. Proposed new article 58B(10), under clause 11, states:

"A person aged 18 or over who consumes intoxicating liquor in a part of premises ... is guilty of an offence".

It would therefore be both the licence holder who allows it and the person who is over 18 who consumes it. I suppose that that covers instances in which over-18s potentially try to smuggle in something to hand over to the young person that they are with. Doing that is already illegal in another part of the current law.

Ms Armstrong: OK. There is no mention in the Bill of preloading or of not permitting people into underage functions who are drunk. Perhaps I am missing it, but I do not see those in here. I take it that a search function will be permitted at those underage functions to make sure that people are not bringing something in with them.

Ms Reid: A search function, as in physically searching people, is, I believe, a matter for the Department of Justice. I do not believe that that would come under liquor licensing law, but, again, I can double-check for you. I believe that searches can take place and do take place now. I do not know whether that means a body search. I am being honest when I say that I do not know. Going back to the days when I was out and about, I know that you would have opened your bag and shown it. I imagine that that is perfectly legal, because it does happen now.

Preloading is also outside the remit of a licensing Bill. We have no control over what happens. Preloading happens now. Licensed premises have trained staff at the doors who have a duty of care to young people. That applies to any premises.

Ms Armstrong: I just wonder about underage functions, as they are connected to liquor licensing. That protection should therefore still be there. If there is a bouncer on the door at an underage function, and someone comes along who is clearly drunk or has taken quite a lot of alcohol, that person can be denied access. That will therefore still apply. If somebody like that turns up at a bar or anywhere else where alcohol is being sold, that person can be denied access. Young people would not be served drink at an underage function, but I am just trying to think about the protection in place for children who turn up preloaded because they cannot buy drink there. You are saying that they will be denied access.

Ms Reid: Absolutely. That happens now. There are engagements among licensed premises, the police, the SOS bus in Belfast and suchlike. I spoke to someone in the Belfast Trust who said that, where there are specific underage events, it generally works with the councils and ensures that somebody is there on-site. We all know of issues that have happened in the past, where large numbers of young people have arrived and incidents have been declared as a result.

For underage functions, licence holders have to go the court twice. They have to go to the court to begin with to prove that the premises are suitable for an underage function. The court will take into consideration the safeguards and how they are going to protect young people at the event. I imagine that that will include people arriving at the door. That is for the court to decide. For each individual formal or event, licence holders need to go back to the Magistrates' Court to apply for permission to hold it. The safeguards are definitely there, as is the engagement. We know from the Hotels Federation's evidence that there is no doubt that all premises involved, particularly those that hold

formals, want such events to take place in licensed premises, which are regulated environments with responsible adults there to assist should people get themselves into any trouble.

Ms Armstrong: I definitely would rather have them attend a formal in premises that are regulated than have them disappear off to house parties at 9.00 pm or 9.30 pm.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Kellie makes a good point there. The young people whom we spoke to said that the clause could see a decrease in alcohol consumption, because, at the moment, they leave at 9.00 pm and all head off to local bars around their town or to someone's house and consume alcohol. They were very honest with us, which was great, although some of them said that the legislation will not stop them smuggling in alcohol, which will happen. They said that if young people want to drink alcohol, they will drink it, and no amount of legislation will stop them. We were told about some rather innovative ways in which they smuggle in alcohol. On the plus side, however, the Bill will discourage them from leaving at 9.00 pm. Does anyone have any other questions or comments on the clauses?

Ms Armstrong: I know that we talked about this in one of the witness sessions, but I just want to check whether there is any overlap happening with the Department for Infrastructure on alcohol consumption on buses. Before young people get to an event, they may well travel on a bus. When we talk about private functions and major events, the issue of alcohol consumption on buses will come up. We are saying here that young people may well have a drink in advance of a function. That is not the venue owner's responsibility, but, if there is a package involved, where the venue owner and a local bus operator or taxi firm are involved in organising the function, is there anything about that, or do we just have to leave it to DFI?

Ms Reid: There is nothing in the liquor licensing legislation. I think that it comes down to the remit of the Department and the scope of the Bill. The liquor licensing legislation relates specifically to licensed premises, and buses do not constitute a category of premises. DFI would be in control of that legislation.

Ms Armstrong: OK. Party buses and such things are not considered a venue.

Ms Reid: No. They are not a category of premises.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Transport is covered in my Chair's brief when we get to the later discussions. Several things have been brought up that are not within the remit of the Bill, but, as a Committee, we may still want to put them in our report, whether as recommendations or whatever. Those issues are not part of the Bill, but the Committee can include recommendations on them for other Ministers or Departments in its final report on the Bill. I remind members that that option is there.

Are members happy with clauses 11 and 27?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): We will move on to clauses 12 and 28, which relate to private functions. Suzanne, please go ahead.

Ms Breen: The clauses will allow under-18s to remain on licensed premises beyond the current 9.30 pm restriction in order to attend a private function. Members of the public must not have access to the function. Persons under 18 must be in the company of a parent or someone with parental or caring responsibility. A main course, at least, must be served, and that meal cannot be consumed on any counter being used as a bar.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Thank you for that. These clauses have generally been seen by the hospitality, hotel and club sector as being a welcome development and reflective of changes in society. The sector believes that it is important that young people be included in family events and that they have an opportunity to engage in social activity in a controlled and regulated environment. As with many of the other clauses, however, a number of specific issues have been raised with the Committee. It has been said that "private functions" should be clearly defined to include weddings, wedding anniversaries, christenings, birthday parties etc. I do not know whether we are intent on being that specific in the Bill. If a party is more casual dining, it has been asked whether the clauses are suitable.

The Federation of Clubs had some concerns over what constitutes a main meal. That issue also came up among our young people, who talked about going to a family anniversary, a birthday party of a grandparent or whatever. It puts the family under greater pressure, and a lot more financial pressure, if there has to be a main meal served. I have been to a few family parties at which there has been a buffet or the family have brought food along to a club. There were therefore a few issues raised about cost. If there has to be main meal served in order for under-18s to remain beyond 9.30 pm, some people in society will not be able to afford that, so that causes a bit of a problem.

Moreover, should the definition of "has care of that person" be interpreted generously if an older child, an aunt or a grandparent is there? Is it as long as it is an adult over 18 is providing the care? There were some concerns about birthday parties and about types of entertainment provided at parties that are geared mostly at adults. You can all use your imagination for that one. It has been said that careful consideration needs to be given to eighteenth-birthday parties that have the potential to attract underage persons to a venue at which the bar is open. The point was made that the responsibility for the protection of children from alcohol-related harm should lie with the operator in the case of all drinks being purchased by the function host.

There are few questions there if Suzanne or Carol wants to pick on them, especially those around the meal issue. Our young people recognised that that could pose a problem for their parents or grandparents should they wanted to hold an anniversary party or a birthday party in a social club or a hotel. What was the rationale behind the need for a main meal?

Ms Reid: I will pick up on those. I have just realised that I do not think that you can see me.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I cannot, Carol. We can hear you though.

Ms Reid: I am sorry. My camera is on, and I tried very quickly to see what was going on so that I could fix it, but I am heart scared of being pushed out. If we have a break, I will try again.

You asked about the definition. You are right: there is a concern about a risk of being overly prescriptive. It could lead to confusion if there is a list of what is and is not allowed. It could also rule out a significant family event in the future that nobody has thought of. That is why it was defined as being private, meaning that the public cannot access it. You are talking about family, friends: it is invited guests.

As to what constitutes a meal, the definition is:

"a meal consisting of at least a main course is being served".

It would not necessarily have to be provided by the venue and paid for by the family. There is case law on a main table meal, where it is more than a simple snack, but we have stepped away from the main table meal and purposefully used the definition of the main course to allow for things such as buffets.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): As you said, it does not have to be supplied by the venue. At many of our family parties, my mum and my aunts have made lots of things and brought them along. Is that acceptable? Not for my mother and my aunts to provide for everybody's party. I mean everybody else's mother and aunts [*Laughter.*]

Ms Reid: The way in which it is drafted is that it is "being served". I will go back and check with the draftsperson on that one. It could be that it might possibly be "available" rather than "being served". We can double-check to make sure that that is covered. The meal definitely needs to be there, and there definitely needs to be some sort of refreshment provided. Again, you are talking about having young people under the age of 18 in a licensed premises. Realistically, if it is only drinking that is happening beyond 9.00 pm, there is the question of whether it is suitable for young people to be there.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I agree with that 100%.

Ms Reid: The reference to "has care of that person" was drafted specifically. The draftsperson had raised issues about using just the term "parent", or even the term "parental responsibility". There are so many different ways in which families are made up at the moment. You could have a parent who perhaps works in the emergency services and had fully intended to go to their grandparent's birthday

party or to an anniversary with the child but then got called into work late in the day. If the clause had been drafted specifically using the term "parent", that would mean that the young person would miss out on the family function because the parent had to go to work. That wording was therefore chosen very carefully to reflect the fact that it means someone who "has care of that person". It is not intended to mean just someone over the age of 18. It would allow a couple, where one is 18 and one is 16 or 17, to have care of that person.

You mentioned the types of entertainment that are provided at parties. Again, they are private functions at which there is no access for the public. That suggests that, where it is friends and family, there has to be a level of parental responsibility there and that certain types of activities would not be allowed if young people were present. Again, at eighteenth-birthday parties, they have to be in the company of a parent or carer. All the conditions and offences around the sale of alcohol still apply. Anybody over 18 who is there is committing an offence if they supply alcohol to a young person or purchase alcohol with the intention of supplying it to a young person.

Similarly, it was mentioned that the responsibility should lie with the operator. It always does. Licence holders have a serious responsibility whenever they are granted a licence, and they have to be aware of all the safeguards around having under-18s on their premises. If they choose to allow that, they have to make sure that they follow the safeguards. There are ramifications if they do not. There are offences associated with not following them.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thanks for that, Carol.

Mr Newton: I understand the points that are being made, but being "in the company of" does not necessarily mean that young persons are being supervised. What would be wrong with the definition "supervised by an adult family member"?

Ms Reid: I will need to check with the drafts person again. When we are drafting, we specifically state what we want the law to allow and what we do not want it to allow. I do not know the answer to that, so I will need to double-check it.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I suppose that there are occasions at which a neighbour's child turns up at a family event because the child knows the family well. That child is not being supervised by its own parent, however; it is someone else's parent who is supervising the child. It is a question of being too prescriptive — we do not want to do that — and not allow for such things to happen. I do not know.

Ms Reid: You ask why it is not "under the supervision of" instead of "in the company of". There are large function rooms in some premises, and one parent's definition of "supervising" a child might be very different from another person's definition. When it comes to having to be "in the company of", I suggest that the parent should have sight of the young person, but I will double-check that and come back to the Committee, if that is OK.

Mr Newton: I will comment, Chair. I would have thought that the venue would want to be assured that the under-18 is getting some degree of supervision, particularly if it is a large premises. It is the venue's responsibility not to supervise the under-18 but to ensure that the under-18 is supervised by whomever is accepting the responsibility of bringing the young person to the venue.

Ms Armstrong: I take Robin's point. However, I do not think that it should be limited to family, because then you have to prove blood ties. That is a whole other ball game. I have a daughter who is almost that age, and she will, hopefully, have an eighteenth birthday party at some stage after lockdown. All her friends are not blood relatives, but they may as well be family. Certainly, when they were allowed, they treated my house as if they were my son or daughter.

In education, there is a rule about the number of young people per adult, but we are not stating that here. Therefore, you could have an eighteenth birthday party, where the person's parents are present, and there could be another 200 people under the age of 18 at the venue. How many adults per young person would be appropriate for supervision, or is it being left vague?

Ms Reid: That is not covered under the current draft.

Ms Armstrong: OK. Technically, you could have a private function, such as an eighteenth birthday party, with underage people there and only one parent or the equivalent of a parent in the venue.

Ms Reid: In the definition, the person under the age of 18 has to be in the company of their parent or carer. I imagine that, in the case that you mentioned, if the police arrived on the scene for any reason, and there was an event with one parent —.

Ms Armstrong: Can we please be very careful? I know that the draftspeople need to be careful. I have worked with Kinship Care NI. There are not always official parents or carers for young people. A person aged 17 may have left home and be independent of any adults. How will that work? I do not want to discriminate against those young people who, genuinely, have left home at 16 and do not have a parent or carer. Let us not use the legislation to discriminate further against those young people. They already have lots of problems. For instance, if someone has left a care home or is not with their family, does that mean that they cannot go? Can a friend who is over 18 or a friend's parent be their supervisor? I do not want us to *[Inaudible.]*

Ms Reid: No, absolutely. That is a very valid point. There are circumstances where a young person, potentially close to the age of 17, has left care and has no one who is responsible for them or who could take responsibility. OK. I will take that point away.

Ms Armstrong: Do we want to use the terminology that is used in education, where it is one adult per eight children? I think that it is eight children. I do not know. If we leave it vague, to be honest, I can see somebody saying, "Do you know what? I am the parent. I will be in the corner. The rest of them can crack on. There are 200 here. I am the responsible person". People will try to find a way round it. Do we need to put a number on it, or is it better left vague?

Ms Reid: There would be concerns about leaving it vague when young people are involved. I know that it is slightly different when you reach the close-to-18 stage. I think that you are right. Through the Chair, I will take that point away and consider it. We can look at the education system and work out the best way forward on that.

Ms Armstrong: Thanks, Carol.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Do any other members want to comment? No. Are we happy to move on?

Mr Durkan: Sorry, Chair. You touched on and Kellie expounded on the parent issue. I was thinking along the same lines as Kellie about having a kind of adult:child ratio. I do not think that it can be just a parent, because someone bringing their 12-year-old to an event, for example, could say to him or her to bring a wee friend to keep them company, but they are not necessarily going to invite their parents. It is important to have that flexibility.

Mr McCann: I understand what people are saying, but, as with many of these things, we need to be careful about overthinking it. You could end up putting in clauses or paragraphs that make it very difficult to organise a function. There are many parents who do not go to those events, and a responsible adult may suffice. We understand why we are having this debate and why this has been raised; it is to try to deal with some of the difficulties that there have been for sports clubs and other clubs around young people going in to enjoy awards events and the like. We need to be careful about overthinking it, because we could end up making it worse than it already is.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): You are right, Fra. That is why we are asking for the definition to be interpreted as generously as possible. There are so many people who do not fall in to that conventional norm.

Mr Durkan: I forgot to declare an interest. *[Inaudible]* at this point. From my experience, one of the biggest difficulties that the law as it stands creates is around christenings. There are premises with function rooms that cannot have a christening, or, if they do, the baby cannot go *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes, there are lots of problems as it stands. Good one. Does anybody else want to make any comment on clauses 12 and 28, which concern private functions? No.

We move on to clause 13, which concerns the delivery of intoxicating liquor to young persons. Again, Suzanne, I pass over to you.

Ms Breen: Thanks, Chair. The clause amends the Licensing Order to make it an offence to make a home delivery of alcohol to anyone under 18.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): There we are; that was short and sweet. Members, as you will know, there was widespread support for the prohibition of the delivery of alcohol to people under the age of 18 and for requiring proof of age to be shown and recorded on delivery. However, there were a number of concerns about the exaggerated risk around such deliveries, the practical implications and the policing of that. The view was expressed that it will have only a minimal impact on reducing alcohol consumption. It was highlighted that deliveries of alcohol by taxi to homes has been common for years and, although illegal, the rules are rarely enforced around that.

Some specific points were raised about the need to ensure that delivery drivers and bicycle couriers delivering alcohol are over 18. We had a bit of a discussion last week about the delivering of alcohol and being over 18. We know that, potentially, someone can be 16 or 17 when it comes to motorcycle or car deliveries. Evidence to us highlighted new technologies for age verification and that the legislation may need to leave the door open in that regard. The question is whether that could be done via regulations. There was a concern that the requirement for identification to be recorded on delivery will present practical difficulties for retailers and their delivery staff.

There is the question of how online orders arriving through the post and from other jurisdictions will be covered, such as the likes of a gin club, a wine club or a beer club. Some thought that the responsibility surrounding the delivery of alcohol should remain with the retailer and that young people should not be criminalised for taking delivery of alcohol.

Those are just some of the issues that were highlighted to us through evidence sessions and our young people's event. Do you want to answer any of those queries, Suzanne or Carol?

Ms Reid: There is quite a bit there that has been raised. On the point about there being a minimal impact, it is difficult to say what the impact will be, but, ultimately, there is a cumulative impact of all the provisions in the Bill. The aim is to reinforce the message that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity. It can be harmful, especially when you bring young people into the mix.

The taxi issue was discussed, as you mentioned, as part of the 2016 Bill. Some of the members were part of that discussion. It is common knowledge; people know that it happens. The PSNI said that it was difficult to enforce and that was partly due to lack of evidence and lack of reporting. Although there was knowledge there, the problem was having somebody come forward to say that. For obvious reasons, they might not want to do that.

The underage employee was covered last week. It is currently illegal for the licence holder, or their servant or agent, to send somebody out to deliver. That comes back to the licence holder's responsibility. It is part of the terms and conditions of holding a licence. As I mentioned before, there are supermarkets where, if you go online to do your grocery order, there might be times of the day when they do not deliver alcohol. You might be surprised to see that, but my understanding is that it is because the driver, at that time, is not 18. It does not cause too many difficulties for them.

The age verification and new technologies issue came up last week as well. The new technologies remove the human interaction and supervision. When we deal with young people, there are always ways for them to circumvent those new technologies, if there is no human interaction. It is about making sure, with young people, that protection exists. What else did you talk about?

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): The other bit was to do with deliveries via post. I know about that, because I am a member of a wine club; I have been for years. That delivery is left at my front door. No signature is required. Nothing is required. That said, my children would not have dared to open the box. I do not think that many young people out there would have done. This legislation does not cover deliveries of alcohol through the post.

Ms Reid: The legislation and the remit of the Bill relate only to licensed premises in Northern Ireland. Where there is a licensed premises in Northern Ireland, we can require it, or its servants or agents, to ensure that a proof-of-age check is carried out. There are so many companies delivering now. Royal Mail has an age verification scheme for products such as alcohol, the delivery of knives and things like that. However, it relies on the customer notifying them at the point of postage, and then they will ask for that age verification when they get to the premises.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you for that. Members, do you have any comments or queries? Kellie?

Ms Armstrong: We have a unique situation at the moment with COVID. By the time that a delivery driver finds my house and makes it out into the sticks, they are happy to leave something at the door and run on to their next delivery. As you said, it is really up to the person who has sold it and is posting it to make the delivery people aware of the contents. Is that something that we can even think about in the Bill? As the Chair said, it could be a wine or gin club, and it could originate outside Northern Ireland. We could be tying ourselves up in knots on this, and it is very difficult to enforce.

Ms Reid: If it originates outside Northern Ireland, we have no control over it. The 1996 Order specifically relates to licensed premises. The whole Licensing Order is predicated on that. It is the same issue as the buses. If it is not a licensed premises, nothing can be done under liquor licensing legislation.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): It is something that we can include when we write our final report on the Bill. Is there anything else that members want to bring up under the clause? No.

We move on to clause 29, which is, "Young people prohibited from bars". The clause is specific to sporting clubs. Suzanne, do you want to go ahead?

Ms Breen: Yes. Thanks, Chair. Under-18s will be permitted to stay in the bar area of a sporting club up to 11.00 pm during the summer months, which, in the Bill, are 1 June to 31 August, and to attend one award ceremony at any other time of the year.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you for that. Members, you will know that there was considerable support for the proposal to allow under-18s to remain on sporting club premises until 11.00 pm during those summer months, as long as appropriate safeguards and appropriate adult supervision are in place, and for attendance at one award ceremony. However, there were considerable concerns about the health impacts and normalisation of alcohol consumption. The following issues were raised: that the rules around children on licensed premises should not be relaxed, because doing so would risk early initiation with alcohol; that the primary focus of sports clubs should remain the promotion of health and well-being by being a community asset to support active, healthy lives, free from a drinking culture; and that the main effect of the proposal is, again, to familiarise children with drinking culture to the future benefit of the alcohol industry.

There were those who supported the proposal, but they also raised specific issues. The Federation of Clubs highlighted that the time period should be from 1 April to 31 October, as the entire spectrum of sports probably requires much longer to enable academies to train. The GAA specifically requested that the period run from at least May until the end of September. It was also requested that there be a more general application of the clause, as many sporting competitions and ceremonies are not just confined to the summer months, and that underage prize-giving be permitted on club premises three times per young person per year, allowing for young people who play for a number of different teams or a number of different age profiles in teams. The PSNI recommended that, on young people attending an award ceremony, the sporting club advise the police at least seven days in advance of when that is to take place.

During our young persons' event, one of the guys in my group said that he plays rugby and Gaelic and that, even though his rugby season finishes in April, the awards ceremony has to wait until June. Others said that they play for their club's under-19s and under-15s and that they would therefore be penalised because they would be unable to attend more than one award ceremony. So lots of issues have been flagged up. I know that the Committee had a lot of discussion about it. We may want to have a discussion about it with Claire in closed session later. Suzanne or Carol, can you respond to any of those suggestions or questions?

Ms Reid: Certainly, Chair. To begin with, I will go back to the policy intent. The policy is there to allow a young person, after engaging in a sporting activity, to go into the club for refreshment, especially when that sporting activity goes on later into the evening. Currently, that is allowed until 10.00 pm, so if the activity goes on past 10.00 pm in the middle of the summer, they have to stay outside. The policy also allows them to stay in that safe place while they wait for their transport home. The safeguards remain: they cannot be seated at the bar; they cannot purchase alcohol; nobody can purchase alcohol for them; no consumption; and those sorts of things.

I believe that those months were based on the response to the 2012 consultation. Those months — 1 June to 31 August — were, for want of a better term, the most voted for. We have taken the thoughts of the Minister on that one, given the amount of evidence that has been received saying that those months are inadequate now. The Minister would be minded to consider an increase in those months, if the Committee made such a proposal.

Prize-giving is not limited to the summer months. It could be at any time of year. Again, given the evidence that has come forward, officials engaged with the Education Authority (EA). Its Youth Service took forward some work for us as the part of the Department's 2019 consultation, but it acknowledged that there were not very many young people in attendance who were members of sporting clubs. Given that and the new evidence, again, the Minister would be minded to consider increasing that cap, if the Committee proposed that.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. The Committee certainly received a lot of evidence about the increases. It is good to know that the Minister is so minded, if the Committee were to be in agreement with that.

Mr Newton: I just have a minor point, Chair. It goes back to our previous discussion on clause 12. The British Beer and Pub Association made the comment that it supports the proposal to allow under-18s, but, within that, it makes a safeguard request that "appropriate adult supervision" be in place. In its submission on this clause, it is using the point that we were discussing under clause 12 about appropriate adult supervision.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Robin. Do members want to come on this issue to do with sporting clubs?

Ms Armstrong: I have a point for technical clarification. Does this mean that the Committee will need to put forward an amendment for the Minister to consider, or, if we give something through to the Minister now, will the Department be minded to amend that?

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): The Minister will bring it forward if the Committee is in agreement with it. The Committee does not need to propose an amendment. The best way is for the Minister to bring forward an amendment rather than the Committee. Suzanne and Carol will take back to the Department all the Committee's deliberations and conversations. Forgive me for answering, Suzanne and Carol. In the closed session today, with Claire, we will finalise what we want to see in the Bill — any differences, increases, decreases or whatever it might be. We will do that with Claire this afternoon. That will go to the Department. It will come back and say whether it is minded or not. If it is not minded, we will put our own amendments down. Is that right, Suzanne and Carol?

Ms Breen: That is right, Chair. Thank you.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Are there any other comments on the issue around clubs, permitted hours and permitting young people on premises?

Ms Ennis: It really hit home for me when we had the evidence session from the young people that you will have different age groups, maybe playing soccer, football or camogie. To restrict it to one award ceremony per year will probably be very problematic for those young people and their parents. Later, in our closed session, it is probably something that we will want to thrash out.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes. Thank you, Sinéad.

Ms Reid: You are talking about young people who may play different types of sport. They may be in different clubs. This will relate to each club, so that young person will not be restricted to attending only one award ceremony in one club, if they play three different types of sport for three different clubs. It will only be an issue if they played for the same club at different levels and might have to go to different awards nights. Again, as I mentioned, the Minister will be minded to consider an increase on that cap if the Committee decides to do so.

Mr McCann: As you know, this issue has been debated for a long time. Especially for Sinéad and people who live rurally, GAA is the life and soul of their communities. They do not have only one team; there are multiple teams, male and female and of different ages. Where I live, the local soccer team

may have nine juvenile teams before you even go into the adult teams. Then there is the parents and supporters who buy into some of the stuff. There are many ways that we can liberalise the laws to allow young people the responsibility and the time to go to premises and to take part in lifting trophies or winning medals. For many of them, to do so will be one of the big occasions in their life. I think that we need to keep that in mind. It is not about restricting but about helping as much as possible. On the local GAA, I know that, in the Falls, there is a GAA team and multiple teams of different ages. It has handball teams, football teams, camogie teams, hurling teams and ladies' football teams. You need to be careful that you do not, in trying to do good, start to isolate many of the people who want to participate in these things. I agree with the Minister that there probably needs to be a look at increasing the number of times that people can use this. At some stage in the future, we will have to come back to this.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Fra. You and I know that we looked at this Bill nearly 10 years ago. A lot of the issues have not changed since then.

On a point relating to an event in a social club that does have a bar, if it is an underage event must the bar be closed on that occasion?

Ms Reid: That would be a commercial decision for the club. If you are talking about an underage event, the club would have to go to the court to prove suitability anyway, so if it is a one-room club — is that what you are describing?

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes, it is.

Ms Reid: The court would make that decision. If the court was satisfied that it was a suitable place, ultimately, yes. If it was a private event that was taking place and that was the only place in that club, members of the public would not be allowed to attend. Well, it would not be members of the public because registered clubs may only be attended by members and guests anyway. Nobody who was not part of that function would be able to attend. It would ultimately be for that club to decide whether that was something that it was willing to do.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I suppose that, for some clubs, it means that they have to close to their regulars who might attend on a weekly or nightly basis in order to hold that type of event. It is up to the club to balance that up. That is fair enough. That is OK.

Do members have any further questions on the clause? We are now finished with that set of clauses. Are there any further questions on any of that while the Department is still here? No.

I propose that, before we move on to our sixth set of clauses, we take a short break and reconvene at 11.00 am.

The evidence session was suspended from 10.52 am to 11.04 am.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Members, welcome back. We will move on to our sixth set, which is one clause: clause 22. It relates to extending the licensed area of a sporting club in order for a function to be held. The summary of evidence that we have received on this clause can be found in document 6, which starts at page 319. Suzanne, will you give us an overview of clause 22?

Ms Breen: Yes. Sporting clubs will be permitted to apply to the police to extend the area of the premises that is registered to supply alcoholic drinks for the purposes of holding a function. Police can grant an authorisation up to six times in any year. Each authorisation should last one day but, in exceptional circumstances, can last up to five days. The number of authorisations can be amended by regulations.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Suzanne. Members, on this clause, there were issues from a health perspective. Linking sporting clubs and alcohol consumption remains a concern for some, as it links alcohol with sporting success and leads to the normalisation of alcohol consumption. General public health views were also highlighted, namely not supporting any legislative changes that may lead to an increase in alcohol consumption. However, support was expressed for the proposals that relate to registered clubs, as clubs provide a valuable amenity in local areas and provide young people and the wider community with activities and opportunities to socialise safely. Concern was expressed by some in the hospitality sector that clubs are not always following the current rules on

signing non-members in and out etc and that that, on top of the cheaper prices that they can charge for alcohol, needs to be addressed as it has a negative impact on local hospitality businesses. Members, the PSNI made a number of comments on registered clubs, and those comments can be found at points 7 and 8 in document 6 on page 319.

Do members have any comments on the specific point about whether clubs that wish to alter their premises should apply to the court before any work is carried out, rather than just advising the court when the registration is due for renewal? There was also concern about the potential use of one-day memberships to circumvent the policy intent of the current legislation to allow the public access to a club event rather than to avail themselves of the sports facilities. Do members want to bring up anything on those issues? We will then bring in Suzanne and Carol.

Ms Armstrong: I am wondering how we will deal with the issue that was raised by the police about the alteration of premises during the registration period. Is the Department minded to tighten that up a bit or leave that so that the police have to be notified only at renewal?

Ms Reid: Chair, as far as I understand, we have not yet been advised on that. Should the Committee agree a proposal, we will bring it to the Minister for consideration. There seems to be a disparity between the process for licensed premises and the process for registered clubs. A licensed premises is required to go to the courts in advance, but the registered clubs do not seem to have to do that. There are a number of reasons why the licensed premises process is done by going to the courts. If the courts are not content with the suitability of the changes of a club, they have the power to refuse renewal under the current system. Similarly, under the licensing system, if a licensed premises does not go to court to get that approval in advance, continues to make the amendments and then brings it back to the court at renewal stage, a court can order the licensed premises to return the premises, as much as it can, to the original state. There are definitely things to consider there, and, as I say, if the Committee is minded to propose an amendment, we will, of course, bring that to the Minister for consideration.

Ms Armstrong: OK. I have to declare an interest, Chair, because one of the correspondents is my local, and my daughter works there when it is open. It raised issues about non-members signing in and out. A lot of sporting clubs hold an extraordinary number of very successful charity events, and those involve non-members attending. Is there any further consideration of the one-day membership?

Ms Reid: The issue of non-members attending charity events is covered under the clauses on functions. That is perfectly legal. They can do that, and that is fine. The intention of the one-day membership is to allow a golfer or others to use different clubs of which they are not a member without going through the process of being signed in or having to be in the company of a member for the entire time. Generally, a member of the public has to be signed in to a club and is the responsibility of that member. The one-day membership allows someone to try out a sport. The intent is that the sporting facility is provided by the clubs. Yes, there are instances where a club appears to have openly advertised that it is not a problem to go in if you are not a member: a person can pay a fee, sit in the bar and watch a rugby match on the television. The view of the Minister has been sought on that matter. The Minister is minded to consider an amendment to clarify that issue if the Committee decides to propose such an amendment.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): I listened to the news yesterday about the restrictions and golf. Quite often, golfers will pay a one-day membership to go to another club or play with friends, and that will happen more often when the restrictions are lifted. There will be people who are not full members but are in the club purely to watch sport. It happens with other sports clubs as well. People are not there to sit and drink in the bar. The bars are not open at the moment, but people will have guest memberships rather than full membership of various sports clubs coming out of COVID. We need to be careful with that. Generally, the one-day membership happens for sport, and it is not to sit in the bar. Do members have any other comments on that clause? We will move on.

Members, we move to the seventh set of clauses. We have come to Part 3 of the Bill, the general clauses: clauses 33, 34, 35 and 36 and schedules 1 and 2. Suzanne, will you give an overview of all the clauses in Part 3, which are the more technical clauses? They are clause 34, minor and consequential amendments; 35, repeals; 36, commencement and short title; schedule 1, minor and consequential amendments; and schedule 2, repeals.

Ms Breen: We have also included clause 33, which is interpretation, in that set of clauses. The clause is self-explanatory and sets out the meaning of references to the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and statutory provision in the Bill.

Clause 34 is minor and consequential amendments. The clause allows the Department to make regulations as a result of the Act. Regulations can be amended, repealed and revoked. The clause ensures that any regulations that amend primary legislation must be laid before and approved by the Assembly.

Clause 35 is repeals. The clause directs readers to schedule 2, which sets out the provisions that are to be repealed.

Clause 36 is commencement and short title. The clause allows for a number of sections to be commenced on the day after Royal Assent. Those are the removal of restrictions at Easter, interpretations, the making of regulations and the associated repeals.

Schedule 1 is minor and consequential amendments, and schedule 2 is repeals. Schedule 1 makes a number of amendments to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs Order as a result of the earlier clauses. Those are generally removing or adding references to old and new provisions. As mentioned earlier, schedule 2 lists the provisions in both Orders that are repealed.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Suzanne. Do members have any comments or questions on the general clauses? No. If members are happy, we will move on to look at some additional measures.

Members, we have completed our first pass through the clauses. I will move on to consider a number of issues raised in our evidence sessions that are not currently included in the Bill.

The first suggested additional measure is on clubs and PSNI entry. Members, the Federation of Clubs is seeking an amendment to article 42 of the 1996 Order so that:

"the Police's rights of entry are consistent with those for other licensed premises in Northern Ireland".

It said:

"We do not object ... to the PSNI having right of entry, provided that it is always in the pursuance of crime. That applies to other facets of the hospitality industry and other business sectors".

Do members wish to make any comments on that? I remember that evidence session, where the witnesses said that they felt that they were not being treated the same. Do members have any comments before I go Suzanne and Carol? There are no comments, so, Suzanne and Carol, is there any way around this in the Bill?

Ms Reid: I have had a look at it and, from what I can tell, there is very little difference between the PSNI rights of entry for private members' clubs and for licensed premises. It says that everyone present in a registered club can be questioned by the police but, ultimately, they are private members' clubs, so the people present should be members. The federation itself has said that the members, effectively, own the club. I would need more information about what the federation's concerns are because, from what I can tell, there is very little difference between what the police can do under the liquor licensing law and what they can do under the registered clubs law.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Okay. Do members have any comment on that? No. We will move on to number 2, which is minimum unit pricing. We know that the minimum unit pricing is outside the scope of this Bill. It lies with the Department of Health. We have already received assurances from the Minister of Health that he is committed to a consultation on this matter. However, given the amount of evidence that we heard in favour of this and saw across the submissions, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge it.

Evidence given to us highlighted that the loyalty schemes, which are within the scope of the Bill, can coexist with minimum unit pricing. It was noted that this further supported maintaining the cash equivalency of loyalty points. However, some evidence highlighted that minimum unit pricing will have limited impact on reducing alcohol consumption and preventing alcohol-related harm, as large companies continue to sell cheap alcohol.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is very supportive of the potential adoption of minimum unit pricing and noted in its submission:

"A 10% increase in the price of alcohol would lead to a 5% decrease in its consumption."

It also said:

"Minimum unit pricing (MUP) would affect high risk drinkers and off-trade the most".

Again, this is not within the scope of the Bill, but I think that it is important that all the stuff that we will go on to do is stated on the record for when the Committee finalises its report.

Do members have any comments or queries about that? Are they content with that?

Members indicated assent

.I will not ask the departmental officials, because I know that it is not within the scope of the Bill, but I imagine that the Department is working with the Health Minister to see that this consultation is rolled out before the end of the mandate.

Ms Reid: Absolutely, Chair. As officials, we have worked closely with Department of Health colleagues for years. Communities and Health Ministers have also met and discussed the issue a number of times. There is a general acceptance across the board that it will not solve all of the problems, but the available evidence clearly demonstrates that it has the potential to have quite a significant positive impact. When we talk about the negative impact of alcohol-related harm and look at the numbers for the harmful use of alcohol and the deaths associated with that, it comes down to saving lives, at the end of the day.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): You are absolutely right. Do members have any comments? Are members content to move on?

Members indicated assent.

Number 3 is entertainment venues: cinemas and bowling alleys. We heard evidence from Omniplex Cinemas, Movie House Cinemas and Brunswick Moviebowl. They all requested that cinemas be allowed to sell alcohol, stating that there was no justification to permit alcohol to be sold to those attending a theatre but not those attending a cinema. It was highlighted to us that:

"All ... neighbouring jurisdictions permit the sale of alcohol in cinemas in certain circumstances",

allowing for the development of a unique cinema experience. The businesses were keen to highlight the evolution in the cinema offering, with a growing trend towards cinema being more of a "luxury experience" including live-streaming operas and ballets etc.

They were open to consideration of the time restrictions. The cinema businesses believe that this could be achieved by cinemas being expressly included in the list of places of public entertainment, which currently lists only theatres, ballrooms and racetracks. It could be the same licence as theatres have at the moment.

In addition, the Jet Centre requested that the Committee review the rules surrounding bowling alleys and the service of alcoholic beverages at the tables situated at lanes, rather than making a differentiation between the restaurant area and bowling area. It was requested that restaurant licences be extended to include all seated parts of the bowling alley, or that it has the option to license bowling lanes separately. Can the Department come in on that? You will know from our witness sessions that the issue has been raised. Is there any feedback from the Department on whether the Minister is minded to look at that at all?

Ms Reid: Those particular issues have not been brought to the Minister yet. Increasing the category of premises where on-sales are permitted has not been part of the policy or the review of the reform of liquor licensing for as long as it has been ongoing. The aim of the Bill and the 2016 Act is twofold: yes, we are looking to assist the hospitality industry and support tourism and the economy; but the other side of that is to contribute to Department of Health objectives on the reduction of alcohol-related harm. That has to be done through a reduction in consumption. If you increase the number of

available premises where alcohol consumption can take place, you will achieve the opposite of your aim. Increasing those categories of premises where on-sales are permitted is not part of the current policy. That would be a significant change to the current system. It has not been consulted on before. If you are talking about licensing cinemas, with the number of them that are around the place, it could lead — ultimately, it would lead to an increase in the number of licensed premises.

As regards the Committee's deliberations, there are many things to consider. At the minute, cinemas are some of the few places that are entirely family-friendly and alcohol-free. They are not just family-friendly; there are many people who would not choose to be around alcohol, and, for them, the cinema option is there as somewhere to go for entertainment. You need to look at the permitted hours, the significant number of under-18s who visit cinemas and whether alcohol can be brought into screenings. How safe would it be for alcohol to be brought into screenings? You are talking about the lighting in dark spaces. That is all very practical, but what is the potential for young people to get access to that alcohol? Who is expected to deal with any issues? Would the staff be expected to deal with issues if anything went wrong with somebody who was consuming alcohol? Again, they are at a screening. In licensed premises, everybody has to be visible. If you want to alter your premises, the courts have to consider whether you have altered it so much that you lose visibility of people who are consuming alcohol. There is a lot to consider there.

You mentioned bowling alleys as well. Yes, currently, there are bowling alleys where alcohol is served. The reference was to the fact that it is restricted to the tables. That is because there is a restaurant licence in force. It is the only way in which they are able to get a licence, bar getting a pub licence. Bowling alleys are not currently one of the categories that can apply for a licence. Again, there would be serious questions about allowing alcohol to be consumed at the lanes, which has been the request, purely from a safety perspective. I imagine that the police would have something to say about people being on a slippery floor with bowling balls — I do not know what weight bowling balls are — and with alcohol thrown into the mix. Most bowling alleys provide a family environment, although some have a licensed restaurant. Large groups of young people who are in and around 16 years old do not have to be supervised when they are in a bowling alley, and they are not supervised. The Committee has to consider that. I know of a bowling alley that has a licensed restaurant. Every weekend, it has to have door staff, and they are regularly seen having to eject people who have had too much alcohol. There is a lot to consider as part of your deliberations, Chair.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): It is all about balance. To play devil's advocate, from a health perspective, increased licensing hours, Easter opening and many other things will lead to a greater increase in alcohol consumption than a cinema selling a couple of glasses of wine to somebody watching a ballet being live-streamed or something like that. We talk about balance and alcohol consumption, but I do not think that cinemas and bowling alleys are the type of place where we will see an overconsumption of alcohol, but I stand to be corrected.

The Committee was quite sympathetic to the plight of cinemas. When we go into closed session, we will consider whether we want to support that call. I have been in cinemas and bowling alleys in America and elsewhere, where there were no issues in taking your beer to your bowling lane. Maybe we have a different way of treating alcohol. I do not know.

Mr Easton: Is there evidence of issues across the rest of the UK with cinemas selling alcohol? Do officials have any evidence that that is a bad idea?

Ms Reid: We have looked into what happens in other jurisdictions. There does not seem to be very much information at all, even as to which venues have licences. The Republic has different categories of licence. It has a "publican's licence", which is for on-sales. With cinemas, there is a licensed premises within a cinema. The cinema is not licensed; there is a licensed premises inside it. It can be used only for functions before and after screenings.

In GB, it is a different system altogether, as you know. Any premises can apply, and they have to set out a case and an operating plan. The information is limited, but, ultimately, increasing the number of on-sales premises is not part of the policy.

Mr Easton: Thank you for that.

Ms Ennis: I accept what the officials say. I am thinking off the top of my head, and I wonder whether there is any scope to look at a case where, if a cinema were showing a theatre-type event — a ballet, a concert or something like that — or if the movie were for over-18s, a cinema could apply for a

licence to allow it to sell alcohol. Again, playing devil's advocate, maybe we can tease that out or get some clarity.

Ms Reid: It is not a current category, so you would be adding a new category, which is a significant change to the legislation that has not been consulted on. When the original policy was agreed, it was shared with the Attorney General. If it is something that the Committee is minded to do, and it puts a proposal forward as to how it might work, we will obviously bring it to the Minister for consideration.

Ms Armstrong: May I double-check something? At the moment, can a cinema use someone else's licence to apply for an occasional licence or have a pub apply for an occasional licence in order to serve alcohol at a film screening?

Ms Reid: I believe that it could, but the licence holder who is running that event for the cinema has to bring that to the court and explain why the occasional licence is necessary and whether it meets the criteria for an occasional licence.

Ms Armstrong: OK.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Are members happy to move on? Yes.

The next area for discussion is article 31. Members, the Law Society would have liked to have seen retrospective article 31 applications in the Bill, as there are occasions when minor alterations to licensed premises have been made in the belief that there was no requirement to seek court approval before they were made. Such instances might have been dealt with more effectively by introducing a retrospective provision of article 31 applications. In connection with article 31, the Wine and Spirit Trade Association believes that the Bill should address the 75:25 split of tills in supermarkets where alcohol cannot be purchased, given that the relaxation of the rule due to COVID worked extremely well and without any problems. Suzanne or Carol, is there anything that you want to add on article 31?

Ms Reid: Article 31 clearly sets out what type of alterations a licence holder would need to bring to the court to receive approval. I mentioned earlier that, if the Magistrates' Court retrospectively decides at renewal stage — if it finds out that there has been an alteration to a premises and it is not content with its suitability — it can order that licence holder to restore the premises, and there will be associated costs. There would be concerns if you were to introduce retrospective applications because you could increase the number of times that that happens. At least at this stage, someone goes to the court and the court decides whether or not it is suitable. There would be the potential to increase the number of orders for returning a premises to its original state if the licence holder decided to take that risk, should there be a retrospective option.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Thank you. What about the till split in supermarkets and things like that, given that there was a relaxation during COVID? Have you anything further to add on that?

Ms Reid: On the 75:25 split for which tills are licensed — the ones that have the little ticks on them — and not licensed, a fair amount of investigation was done on that, as you can imagine, as part of the input for those regulations. That split is not in current licensing law. We understand that it is a court recommendation. It is not in the Licensing Order or in any of the regulations. We do not have control over that. The licensing legislation states that you must have non-alcohol tills, but it does not give a number. There are valid reasons for that number of alcohol tills.

There was a specific COVID regulation that, due to relaxations, allowed any till to be used. That was to allow for adequate social distancing during the busy run-up to Christmas and new year. Extremely long queues were forming at the alcohol tills. People were going out maybe only once a week, trying to get everything done in a one-stop shop to get home safely. There were so many people that social distancing became an issue. The relaxation was to allow those premises to have adequate social distancing in place. The 75:25 split is not in the Licensing Order.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Thank you for that. Members, do you have any comments or queries that you want to raise about article 31?

Ms Armstrong: Given the fact that the courts close down over the summer, has that caused an issue up to now? I know that, for instance, the police have been out and noticed that a beer garden has not been appropriately licensed. It effectively means that that venue cannot proceed to submit an

application until such time as the courts are sitting again. Over the years, because the courts take a break over the summer, has it been an issue for the Department, meaning that applications are delayed?

Ms Reid: I am not 100% sure on that. I know that, for certain issues, the courts will sit, but I would need to check with the courts. I do not have a working knowledge of the issue.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Members, we will move on to our next point, which is public health and links to licence granting and renewals. The Department of Health and the British Medical Association (BMA) highlighted similar issues regarding the granting or renewal of licences being considered in terms of the impact on public health in certain areas and the alcohol outlet density. A higher alcohol outlet density has been associated with various aspects of alcohol-related harm, including alcohol-related accidents, self-reported injuries, suicide, alcohol-related road traffic accidents and fatalities. The BMA highlighted the fact that that could be achieved by making public health a core objective and a statutory obligation of licensing. Maybe this is a good time to discuss how the Committee feels about building public health considerations into the Bill, as was highlighted in a number of public health submissions. The Public Health Agency said that it would support the inclusion of an explicit statement that the protection of public health and the promotion of well-being are key objectives of the Bill.

In England, courts can take potential public health implications into account. We know that there may be higher rates of off-sales and public houses in areas of disadvantage so, when issuing any further licences, courts can take into account whether that may have a further negative impact on public health locally. Do members want to comment on that and the possible inclusion in the Bill of a statement on protecting public health?

Mr Newton: Chair, I was under the impression that public health is an integral part of what we are trying to address in the Bill. We all know about the problems in parts of society at the moment, so I think that it would be remiss of us not to — to use your words, Chair — at least make comment in the Bill on public health issues.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Do any other members want to comment on that aspect? No. OK. We maybe need to discuss that afterwards. Many people raised with us the public health aspect of the liberalisation of our licensing laws. Last week, we talked about reviews and the fact that these issues maybe need to be reviewed and be given a time frame for review. We can discuss that further, if members want to do so. Carol or Suzanne, do you want to comment on that?

Ms Reid: The regime here is court-based. On alcohol outlet density and the concerns about over-provision, the court, when granting a licence for a pub or an off-licence, has to satisfy itself that the current number of that type of licence is inadequate, so, if you are going for a pub licence, it is the current number of pubs, and, if you are going for an off-licence licence, it is the current number of off-licences.

The introduction of objectives has been brought up over many years. Officials believe that introducing objectives to licensing law would require a fundamental change to the regime here. The system in GB is often mentioned. I am sure that everybody is aware at this stage that local authorities issue licences in GB, and they have licensing committees and licensing forums. Each time that a prospective licensee applies for a licence, they have to produce an operating plan, which has to set out clearly what type of premises it is, what the business will be, what the opening hours will be and what the policy in respect of children will be. It also has to set out how it will meet the licensing objectives, so licensees can be held to account for how they will protect and improve public health, as specified in their operating plan. The licensing committees can then take that into consideration. As I say, the regime here is court-based, and the letter of the law is followed. Introducing those objectives and having somebody prove how they intend to protect or improve public health would be a fundamental change, albeit health is extremely important, and part of the Bill's aim is to address those issues as well. Equally, the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, public nuisance and protection of children from harm are not things that a court can take into consideration.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Do members have any comments? We will maybe discuss that one later with Claire.

We will move on to the next area, which is conference centre licences. Members, the PSNI highlighted to us the difficulties around policing conference centre licences, leading to complaints from other parts

of the hospitality sector. The PSNI is aware of a number of venues that have never or rarely held a conference but are hosting weddings. One of the requirements of a conference centre licence is that conference rooms must be used exclusively or mainly as meeting rooms. Suzanne or Carol, do you want to comment on that?

Ms Reid: Yes. There are regulations in the Licensing Order that specify the requirements, and the meeting room requirement is obviously one of those. Before a conference centre can go to a court, Tourism NI has to provide a certificate stating that that conference centre conforms with those regulations. The police raised this with us, probably at the end of 2019 as part of the departmental consultation. I have held discussions with Tourism NI, which is confident that, when it visits and carries out its checks, it issues certificates only to premises that conform with those regulations. Tourism NI has assured me that the relevant checks are taking place. It is very difficult to see what more can be done after that.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Conference centres pay a different price for a conference licence than is paid for an entertainment licence, a pub licence and all the rest of it. Others just want to see that they are being treated fairly. I do not know whether the police can give us any figures on where that is happening. We have had a year of no conferences and very few weddings. I was not aware of the issue until we saw in that submission that it is happening, and to the extent that the PSNI is stating that it is happening. However, you are confident that it is not a major issue.

Ms Reid: As I said, we have held discussions with the people at Tourism NI who are in charge of issuing the certificates. They were concerned when I raised the issue, and I reminded them of their requirement under the legislation. They seemed to be surprised that there was any issue.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. I was of the same opinion. If members have no comment on conference centre licences, we will move on.

The next area is the surrender principle. Members, as we know, the Bill does not include any changes to the surrender principle for licensing in Northern Ireland. However, a number of interesting issues were highlighted. The Institute for Social Marketing and Health at the University of Stirling supported the NI surrender principle as it prevents the prolif — I cannot even pronounce that word — prevents there being lots of licensed premises. However, it accepted the potential problem of a pub closure and that licence then being bought by a supermarket. It recommended tweaking the current system rather than ever abolishing the surrender principle.

The surrender principle was highlighted to us as a source of great pain to retailers simply because there are very few licences about, and the licences that are around sell for a couple of hundred times their face value. Many people in the industry view the value associated with their licence as part of the goodwill built up in their business. However, it pushes up the entry cost for new operators.

We know that this is not in the Bill. Mark has raised the surrender principle on occasion, especially in respect of rural towns and villages. Do you want to comment on that, Mark?

Mr Durkan: Yes. I am noting the responses, and I know that there is a separate subsection on rural proofing. Obviously, I accept, understand and appreciate the fact that it prevents a proliferation —

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you, Mark.

Mr Durkan: — of licensed premises, but the fact is that this principle also massively restricts any new licensed premises. It certainly inhibits the growth of new businesses. It is a very tricky one, given the difficulty that licensees have had over a number of years, particularly in the last year. That is why I was thinking along the lines of a community need licence. I floated that idea last week. I do not know whether there would be any opportunity to thrash that out further with officials at some point. It is certainly worth consideration.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Thanks, Mark. I will bring you in again when we get to rural proofing. Does anybody else want to comment?

Mr McCann: I was not at the Committee meeting last week. It is interesting to listen to what Mark is suggesting. What does "community need" entail? What does it mean on paper?

Mr Durkan: I have not given it massive thought, but I outlined the scenario — a couple of those who responded to the consultation refer to it — where a bar in a town or a village closes and the licence is snaffled up by a supermarket or some retail outlet. Then, it is gone. There is no other licence to service that village, and there will not be another one, so you will not have a pub in that village. Given the recognition of Pub is the Hub, as we will touch on later, and how important a role the pub plays in the fabric and identity of some places, particularly on this island, we cannot afford to just let it go.

Fra, the way that I see it is that, where a population does not have access to a pub within a certain radius, a new or existing business — it could be a restaurant that is looking to expand or whatever — might be able to apply, and the Department might be able to grant a certain number per year. I am not sure. I have not given it massive thought, and nor would I be qualified to design the scheme, but it is certainly worth exploring.

Mr McCann: Thank you, Mark. It is certainly an interesting proposal.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes. Do any other members want to comment on the surrender principle?

Ms Armstrong: Apologies if Mark said this in the minute or so that I dropped out of the spotlight, but, as we know, there has been discussion about the cost of licences. It was worthwhile that the Department confirmed that the statutory cost of the licence through the courts is fixed and that it is only when there is a private negotiation that the costs ramp up because of their limited number. We have heard people from the health sphere say that the surrender principle is a great thing for Northern Ireland because it means that we do not have a proliferation of pubs and places where alcohol can be sold. However, when we have asked for lists of licence holders, we have been dismissed quite a bit with, "Look, you need to go to the courts and get the list yourselves". I find that completely astonishing. How do we ensure that we rural proof and support Pub is the Hub, as Mark said, if we do not have a centralised list? We got very helpful maps from the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe); thanks very much for those. It was very useful to see concentrations of bars in areas where people go to have a night out. Then, of course, you see other areas, in rural towns and villages, where there is not the opportunity for people to go or for a night-time economy to be developed because the licences are just not there.

Why will the Department not keep a list of licences? As part of the surrender principle, should there not be some way in which we can see where those licences are and where they are going? It goes back to another point about changes of directorship. I appreciate that the courts are involved in this — rightly so. However, surely there should be some central connection for it. If we were minded at some stage to take forward amendments, for instance, to add a local producers' or any other type of licence to this, I would expect those to be listed with criteria as well. Why can we not, under the surrender principle, hold a centralised list within government? I have concerns about how we can enforce and manage that if we do not have a centralised list.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK. Thanks, Kellie. Suzanne or Carol, do you want to comment on any of those points?

Ms Reid: That issue has raised its head a number of times. The Committee wrote to the Department and should have received a response from us. The difficulty is that the courts issue the licences. The courts have the legal power to ask for all that information. We have asked for an opinion on this, and it has been confirmed that General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) would come into play. There is absolutely no reason for us to hold that information as we are not involved in issuing the licences. The courts hold the relevant information. Unfortunately, they do not hold it electronically. I believe that Belfast is the only court that holds it electronically and, at that, it is an outdated system.

Ms Armstrong: Why is GDPR relevant here? You are talking about companies; you are not talking about individuals. The directors may well be individuals, but these are registered venues. I am not 100% certain how GDPR can be used in this case. HMRC can give a list, through Companies House, of people with registered companies. Why can we not have a list of licensed people? It is published by the courts. Why can it just not be collected? I would genuinely love to know how GDPR comes into this. GDPR is about the protection of data on individuals, not companies.

Ms Reid: That is the way that it was explained to me. These are individuals who have applied for liquor licences. The courts hold the information, and we can access that information. Under GDPR, you are also talking about duplication of information. This is information that is already held. It would amount to duplication of information if the Department then collected that information. Each district

court holds the information in a manual in paper format. RaISe will have gone through the courts to get that information. The issue also arose as part of the COVID financial support and rate relief that was available. Our Department and DFE had to contact the courts to get that information. The information is there. There just seems to be a difficulty in accessing it due to how it is held. Work needs to be done on its accessibility.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK, members. Can we move on from that? Yes.

We move on to the next area, which is the levy. Members, the potential for a levy to be raised from the night-time economy was discussed last week. We have noted that it works well in some cities and supports the delivery of emergency services etc. However, in the context of the sector's recovery from COVID, it may be difficult at this time. We spoke last week about maybe looking at it in the post-COVID era. Do members have any further comments to make or questions to ask the Department on this? Are we happy enough with the responses that we got last week?

Ms Ennis: Any levy on the industry should be funnelled to support people with alcohol addiction and into supporting services, rather than being used to supplement PSNI wages or for any other plans that there might be for it. I am not saying that I support a levy. I am saying that, if we are talking about a levy, it should be used to support and increase services and funnelled to help people who are struggling with alcohol addiction.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Sinéad, that would be similar to the levy that is applied to gambling. This levy could be something similar, with the money going to help people who have a problem with addiction.

Ms Ennis: Yes.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Are there any other comments on the levy? We discussed this at some length last week. Are members happy to move on? Yes. We come to number 9, which is off-licence. Members, there were a number of comments in our evidence regarding the prevalence of off-licences in some communities where there are not even enough grocery shops and highlighting the need for stricter regulations to make it harder for these places to open, stricter controls on their opening times, etc. This is an issue where we can talk about rural proofing. These places need to be a hub that can furnish a community with much more than alcohol. Do Members want to comment on off-licences? Are you happy that we move on and just highlight this issue?

Ms Armstrong: Does the Department know how much evidence of antisocial behaviour in an area is taken into account? We have not seen as many problems in student areas in Belfast — thank goodness — but it required an extensive police presence. If there have been difficulties in an area, is that taken into consideration in the decision to issue a licence to an off-licence?

Ms Reid: Yes; it should be. Anybody making an application has to notify the local police and council. The police will raise anything that they are aware of. Obviously, something as serious as antisocial behaviour would be included in the application. The police then have an opportunity to attend a hearing of the application. The minute that there is an objection, a clerk cannot grant a licence, and it has to go through a court hearing. If the police make an objection, it goes to a court. They appear, they set out their evidence, and, then, it is over to a judge or a court to decide.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): The question that follows on from that is about the judiciary. In my 10 years as an MLA, we have had issues in our area with bars, restaurants, off-licences or whatever it might be. The PSNI, along with the council, have done excellent jobs in building up cases to bring to court but, when they get to court, nothing happens. How seriously are these complaints taken when they get to court? In my experience, and I was on the council for a number of years, complaints come through, especially about bars, but often, after all the evidence gathering, they go nowhere. I know that it would be hard to come by, but we nearly need information on how many times courts turn something down based on evidence from the PSNI. I do not know whether you know the answer to that; I would not expect you to.

Ms Reid: I do not, Chair; no.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): No. It is all well and good having all these things in place, but it depends on whether they are actually acted upon.

If members are content, I will move on to number 10, which is rural proofing. The Committee was encouraged to welcome and support any change in Northern Ireland licensing legislation that will inspire rural pubs to deliver additional services or activities to their communities. The Pub is the Hub model has been highlighted to the Committee. It was also highlighted to us that the Bill does not address a fundamental flaw of current licensing that leads to the migration of licensed premises from rural areas and villages, the number of licensed premises in which will continue to be depleted with the large pub chains buying quiet rural pubs and reusing the licences in entirely different locations. Mark, do you want to talk to this?

Mr Durkan: It is really the point that I have already made, although it is good to see others making it. Where Hospitality Ulster coming from is interesting. Its answer is to get support or make existing pubs sustainable. I do not know whether there is any suggestion on how that could be done. That is not necessarily the solution either because some were barely sustainable and, after a year in which they were open for a handful of weeks, will not be sustainable at all. You will have older licence holders and owners in rural places, and you will not have someone looking to come in and take the business over from them. They will just see who they can sell the licence to, and I would say that, more often than not, that will be a retailer as opposed to someone with an aspiration of opening a bar.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): You are quite right, Mark. Do members, or Suzanne or Carol, want to make any further comment on this issue?

Ms Armstrong: The surrender principle is as it is. From the Department's point of view, is there any way of amending the surrender principle, not to change the fact of a limited number but to put a percentage figure on how many should be in each council area, for example? Could we say that x% needs to be retained in rural areas? Is there some way that we can maintain that? We know that, because of how the surrender principle has worked out, it is a lot of licence holders' pension pot. They look forward to being able to sell their licence when the time comes. They get a lot of money, that is them, and good luck to them. However, as Mark and Hospitality Ulster said, our rural pubs are disappearing. They are being bought up by supermarkets. Is there a way to draw a line here and say, "OK, 25%, 30% or whatever need to be in rural areas?", or that, when a licence of one type is issued — a rural pub licence, for example — it cannot be transferred to a different type? Can we restrict it so that it cannot be sold for a hotel or a supermarket?

Ms Reid: There are a lot of issues there. A lot of those suggestions are things that could be done under primary legislation. The issue now is timing. If it has not been considered before, there is an awful lot to consider. That is the first thing that jumps into my head in respect of the example that Mark gave, whereby a town that has not had a licensed premises for, say, a year can apply for a pub: what happens after that? You could have operators taking advantage of that and saying, "Oh, look, I am going to get this at the court recovery costs. There has been no market value attached to it, so I am going to get it at court cost. Then, I am going to open it and run it for any amount of time. Then, I am going to take that back to the big city, and I will not have had to shell out the market value associated with it". So, yes, there is potential to do those things in legislation. You would need to give serious consideration to doing them as amendments to the Bill.

Ms Armstrong: Yes.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes. All the stuff that we are discussing in this latter part of the meeting is really just for us to put on the record. When we go into the Chamber, we have to provide a report of what the Committee discussed. Some recommendations will come out of it. We are not necessarily saying that we need to table an amendment in respect of any of the issues that we are discussing. These are issues that have been raised during the evidence sessions, and it is important that we allow them to be debated albeit, in a lot of cases, they are outside the scope of the Bill. Are members content that we move on from rural proofing?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): We move on to number 11, which is transport. This was mentioned earlier as well. A number of submissions suggested that the Bill represented a missed opportunity to take measures to tackle preloading on transport on the way to venues and the licensing of party buses and taxis. We discussed these issues on a number of occasions, and, as we know, many of them fall outside the remit of the Bill and the Department. Do members want to make any comments on transport that we have not discussed?

Ms Armstrong: With my previous Infrastructure hat on, I went to the policy people in DFI — I am sure that they were happy to hear from me again — to ask about this issue. I appreciate that it falls outside this Department's remit and that it is a DFI issue. However, we did get a response: section 7 of the Transport Act 1967 gives the Department the powers to attach conditions to a bus operator's licence. The current conditions are that the bus operator holding the licence must take all reasonable steps to prevent alcohol consumption on a bus; not do anything to promote or assist the consumption of alcohol on a bus; when undertaking work for third parties — for example, a hotel that is putting on the transport — ensure that the third party is aware of the law in relation to alcohol on buses and not allow it to happen; and display signs in a prominent position.

This is the difficulty: how does a driver look behind him or her when he or she is driving? They do not have eyes in the back of their heads to see if anybody is drinking on the bus while they are driving. There appears to be something in DFI. However, apart from fines or looking at an operator's licence, there is nothing more, which does not really deal with the party bus issue. Might we recommend an update to that in our report?

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes; we certainly can. We can make recommendations to other Departments in our final report that these issues have arisen and need to be acted upon. That is certainly doable.

Suzanne or Carol, do you have anything further to add on the issue of transport? I know that we discussed it earlier in the meeting.

Ms Reid: Nothing really, Chair; no. There have been very public difficulties arising, particularly with young people and preloading and party buses. However, it is not something that the Department can get involved in or has any control over. As Kellie said, DFI is the route for that one.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK; no problem. Are members happy to move on?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): The final item is number 12: advertising. Members, a number of the Public Health Agency submissions highlighted that alcohol product packaging is everywhere; that any further steps to minimise it would be welcome; and that, from a health perspective, all alcohol advertising should be banned. Having discussed advertising as we have gone along, we know that much of it falls outside the scope of the Bill and the remit of the Department — even of the Assembly in general. Some of it is Westminster-based.

Do members have any comments on advertising? The young people brought advertising up in their evidence session. They feel that there needs to be more of a health perspective; perhaps the PHA could run a campaign. In that evidence session, it was surprising that they talked about the number of young people who do not smoke now following the various public health campaigns on smoking. They could not see any public health campaigns on the misuse of alcohol, either nationally or through the PHA, on alcohol. In our report, we may want to encourage the PHA to do something along those lines.

Ms Armstrong: We heard some fantastic evidence from sporting organisations that have taken a voluntary position of not allowing the advertisement of alcohol on anything that relates to youth teams. That is very welcome. There is a lot of good work being done and help being, although its light is hidden under a bushel. We all know that the ban on tobacco advertising made a huge difference. I am very torn on this one. I am sure that the Department has more evidence on why there are limitations on the position put forward in the Bill. Why was an all-out ban on alcohol advertising not proposed?

Ms Reid: The Department does not have the power to do that, Kellie. The Department's remit ends at licensed premises — the physical premises and its immediate vicinity. For anything above and beyond that, you are talking about the PHA and the Department of Health. You are also talking about the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and Ofcom in respect of television and radio advertising, although that is more where there are concerns about advertising than running an advertising campaign. If there are concerns about an advert, the ASA can refer to Ofcom and, ultimately, Ofcom can require that advertisement to be removed. However, running campaigns would be over to the Department of Health.

Ms Armstrong: That clears that up. That is brilliant; thank you.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Yes. We will definitely want to put that in our report. Sinéad will confirm, but I think that it was the GAA that said that it has committed to removing all alcohol sponsorship from its under-18 teams and is making a move to remove it across the board? Is that correct, Sinéad?

Ms Ennis: That is right: the GAA is working hard on that.

I know that this is beyond our remit, but, Chair, you know the issues that we have been looking at in respect of problem gambling. I feel a bit helpless here because we cannot put it into the Bill as it is not this Department's responsibility. However, maybe we could recommend in our report that alcohol products should not be advertised before the watershed or something to that effect. I am sure that we could tease it out in the deliberations as we go along.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Grand. Thank you, Sinéad.

OK. Do members have anything further that they want to ask before the departmental officials leave us? Are there any burning questions for Suzanne or Carol before we say, "Cheerio" to them? No? There you are.

Suzanne and Carol, thank you very much for your time today. We will see you next week and the week after and maybe the week after that as well [*Laughter.*]

Ms Reid: Yes; thank you, Chair.

Ms Breen: Thanks very much, Chair.