

Just to say congratulations on the extremely thought provoking event on 22nd October.

One of the issues that our group felt we need to change - a big issue is the perception that using alcohol to excess means:

You are not responsible for your crimes - Magistrates and Solicitors need to be involved in changing people's perception that this is not true, you will not receive a lighter sentence because you were drunk - you decided to use alcohol to that extent so you are responsible. I have sat in court many times when the defendant or their legal rep says yes I did so and so but I was drunk at the time and they expect to receive a lighter sentence or no sentence at all because of this mitigating factor. The Magistrates should be saying people who commit a crime whilst under the influence will receive the same sentence. Drunkenness is not a mitigating factor it is a sign of people's irresponsibility and will be stated as such.

The next is the perception we are given in the media that for any of life's problems they should first be tackled by having a stiff drink, a day's work, a quarrel with your nearest and dearest etc etc. We need to engage the media in changing social norms that this is not the way to start to tackle tiredness, anger, disappointment etc etc. We have all seen the "soaps" that picture so and so coming home after a long day's work and reaching immediately for the "tinny" or glass of spirits. This should be seen as unacceptable as is smoking now not shown as a sign of sophistication. Alcohol is just like any other tool available to be used or misused.

Hope this helps

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