

**JOINT STRATEGY UNIT AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONSULTATION ON
TACKLING THE PROBLEMS
ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL MISUSE**

BRISTOL EVENT 29th NOVEMBER 2002

**FROM: JOHN HAYMAN - ADVISORY TEACHER FOR DRUG
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ISSUES

Carol Sweetenham outlined the role of the Joint Strategy Unit as “cross-cutting” all departments. Department for Education and Skills has a wide number of initiatives involving Drug Alcohol and Tobacco Education (contacts Sarah McLean – Elaine Dyer) as does the Home Office (BLUEPRINT Research Programme) – Ruth Joyce. In its “cross-cutting” capacity has contact, discussion, advice been sought from DfES?

The Evidence Base – Mr Martin Plant, Alcohol and Health Research Trust UNE.

Mr Plant made some fairly damning remarks in relation to the value of education in this process. While I agree the education process in this field is not perfect, remarks of this nature are damaging when aimed at a predominately Department of Health based audience.

Clearly work with children and young people is vital in the prevention process. (The examples given by Mr Plant of programmes that have been unsuccessful had their origin in America and Australia these being different cultures to ours).

On a more positive note I will respond to your questions around Education and Communication.

- 41 What should be the objectives in this area? Is the aim to raise levels of awareness? Is it to inform more specifically? Is it to change behaviour? Are there any particularly successful or unsuccessful examples we should be aware of?

Awareness/knowledge is vital in order to try and influence behaviour. Contact DfES for examples of LEA based work in schools.

- 42 Given clear objectives, what is the evidence on the effectiveness of these approaches? What do they actually achieve?

With young people I suggest you target them in the Primary School and early Secondary School and issues would be around:

- *Intensive Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills programme.*
- *Family and Parent Work*
- *Media Work*

Backed up by Community Action and sound Health Policy.

- 43 How well is the sensible drinking message reaching its audience? Is it sufficiently clear? What is the evidence on its penetration and its effect on behaviour?

Mixed success unless government are prepared to “take on” advertising – which I personally doubt.

- 44 How well is scientific research feeding into alcohol education? Is the message based on sound, unbiased and uncontroversial research and are new findings effectively incorporated?

The strategy should be feeding into DATs in Coventry. We have incorporated Alcohol within the strategy. However this will need resourcing to the same level as illegal drug prevention to make an impact.

- 45 Should particular groups be targeted for information and communication? Is there a need to provide more intensive alcohol education to groups other than young people (e.g. elderly drinkers)?

Not qualified to answer this question.

- 46 What is the role of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions in providing alcohol education as well as support for alcohol-related problems? How can we best establish and preserve a healthy learning environment?

There is a massive role here, however time and resources, and statutory powers within the curriculum are needed. Schools in particular need respite from the competing pressures of testing and academic performance if they are to be enabled to tackle these crucial health issues with any effectiveness.

- 47 What role is there for families/parents as role models or in educating their children on sensible levels of alcohol drinking and the risks of alcohol misuse? How can they best be informed and engaged in this effort?

There is a clear role here engaging parents will be the issue

- *Who does it?*
- *What are the resource/time implications?*

- 48 What does experience show on the most effective means of getting messages across? Are there circumstances in which the Government is particularly well placed to do so, or conversely might be particularly unsuccessful?

Television/Radio are the powerful media influences. Young peoples magazines could be important – it’s a massive logistical problem.

- *look at the right times (peak viewing)*
- *when are the alcohol advertisements on? – around football coverage in particular.*

49 What can we learn from educational initiatives in the field of illegal drugs?

A sustained approach is vital, speak to young people. Ask them about their perceptions of alcohol education. Ask them what influences them.

50 Do you have views on the existing regulation of advertising on alcohol?

See previous answers. Questions 43/48.