

CPS Headquarters
Policy Directorate
Prosecution Policy Division
DX 300850 Ludgate EC4

SU/DoH Consultation
Room 4.6
Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

9 January 2003

Dear Sir

Re: Consultation – National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Crown Prosecution Service to the questions posed in the above consultation document. The section on crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the consultation document is of particular relevance to the CPS. We would only wish to comment on the following questions:

Question 30

Is it right that anti-crime and anti-social behaviour initiatives need to be targeted on young people?

Yes, because alcohol misuse is often prevalent among young people. The social behaviour and attitudes of this group needs to be concentrated upon in order to ensure that each new generation does not make the same mistakes as before. Nevertheless, older age groups must be made aware of the dangers and implications of excessive drinking as well.

Question 34

Drink-drive policies are generally acknowledged to have been successful. What can we learn from them?

The penalties for drink driving are clear and well known and attract mandatory minimum periods of disqualification. This clarity provides a warning and deterrent to would be drink drivers and in addition drivers are aware of the potential ramifications of a drink drive conviction on their employment and obtaining of motor insurance in the future.

There has been a cultural change in the way drink driving is viewed. It is now generally regarded as socially unacceptable to drink and drive. The use of the media, for instance, in putting this message across has proved beneficial.

Question 35

Domestic violence is often associated with alcohol misuse – either by the perpetrator, or, on occasion, by the victim. What in your experience, is the nature of this link and what would you see as good practice in tackling the interrelationship between domestic violence and alcohol misuse?

Those who commit domestic violence offences are not necessarily influenced by alcohol, but the issues often do coexist in the same way as in other types of offences involving violence. Statistics have shown that in a number of domestic violence cases the offender was under the influence of alcohol at the time that the offence was committed.

University of Sussex research refers to reports from Alcohol Concern stating that 60-70 % of men who assault their partners are under the influence of alcohol; the Crime Reduction toolkits refer to alcohol being a factor in 40% of domestic violence incidents; the Stevenage and North Herefordshire Domestic Violence forum statistics for 2000 – 2001 for North Herefordshire reveal 572 cases, of which 36% of the incidents were alcohol related.

Alcohol or drug dependency may in some cases be developed by victims as a coping strategy, and concerns are that any intervention may only focus on the symptoms of the substance misuse, without making the connection with the domestic violence that is occurring.

The Greater London Domestic Violence Project has recently been exploring these issues with the ‘Stella Project – Separate Issues – Shared Solutions’, covering the points that question 35 raises, looking at positive ways of working with domestic violence and substance misuse (by the victim as well as the offender). They held a conference in December 2002 to discuss the links, identify good practice and the gaps within the existing service provision.

The Leeds Interagency Project have been consulted regarding this issue and their view is that alcohol abuse may make particular incidents of violence worse or perpetrators will unacceptably try to use it as an excuse or justification for their actions. They say it is rare to come across cases of domestic violence where the only factor involved is alcohol abuse, as it is often just one of many factors that are involved in such cases.

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact me at the above address, or by e-mail at David.Woodings@cps.gsi.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

David J Woodings
Lawyer and Policy Advisor

