

## **National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy – Consultation Document Responses from the West Berkshire Safer Communities Partnership**

As an overall comment, it was felt that the consultation document was very wordy and repetitive and would have been more useful if it had focussed on a number of basic questions. However, the responses to the specific questions raised in the document are detailed below and numbered accordingly:-

### The principles that should underpin the strategy

1. The Government should manage harmful aspects of alcohol misuse because of its detrimental effect on: health, crime, domestic and street life. Government intervention is justified when others are harmed or when the quality of their life is effected.
2. Individuals should be taught and encouraged to manage their own alcohol intake through persuasion and services. Where excess leads to harm, crime or deterioration in quality of life for others government should intervene with legislation.
3. As above
4. Consumers should self manage alcohol and voluntary groups can offer information, advice and treatment. Publicans should be trained to manage sales to avoid public drunkenness and all drink related violence should be fed back by pub to the Licensing committee who should monitor and if necessary close down outlets with repeated drink related violent incidents. All alcohol related incidents against staff in A&E should be prosecuted. In addition, 'others' should include CPS, Police and Licensing Committees.
5. Individuals have a right to drink but not to harm others. Children should be educated and protected and adults who abuse this should face serious consequences. Education/information re harmful effects is required as is promotion of drinking in moderation, the fact that alcohol is not necessary to have a good time, the effect of anti-social behaviour on others. There is requirement for legislation with regard to proof of age cards and there should be other options for young people eg better facilities and cafes that open late.

In addition there is a need to reduce the stresses on young people by placing the emphasis on more physical exercise and less exams and Government Departments need to communicate better with each other so that they do not counter each other's strategies.

### The cultural and behavioural issues around alcohol use and misuse

6. Alcohol is misused when it repeatedly leads to physical/mental illness, anti-social behaviour, crime, domestic violence, child abuse and work absence.
7. The government should seek to limit everyday binge drinking by young people unaccompanied by adults and excessive drinking of spirits and high alcohol lager/beer. It should also promote multi-aged and mixed sex venues and activities and look at regulating the number of pubs and clubs in one area. Local authorities could also be more proactive in attracting a certain type and number of establishments in a town centre.
8. Workplace pressures and long hours culture accounts for some increase in drinking. The easy availability of alcohol from stores (as opposed to off licenses) has contributed to increase in drinking amongst young people. In addition there is a lack of family life to provide a role model of sensible drinking. Therefore for young people we need to control access, and for older people we need to

change culture. More encouragement with regard to serving food with alcohol and allowing establishments to cater for families and all age groups would help.

9. Asian women are another group that should be analysed with regard to alcohol-related problems. Role models would be effective in advertising campaigns and there is a need for more clarity with regard to messages. For example young people are currently getting very mixed messages with regard to the use of alcohol as opposed to cannabis.
10. Alcohol generally is a social lubricant at weddings and parties and it helps to lower stress levels.
11. There are probably more male-dominated drinking environments in the north therefore mixed sex and age venues would be preferable, linked to eating.
12. Family background, fashion and marketing. The most difficult to exert influence over however is parental responsibility. However fashion and marketing maybe the easiest to effect, but health statements often have little effect.
13. Probably only with drink driving.

#### Health: prevention, treatment and the impact on the NHS

14. Harmful drinking can be defined as drinking that interferes with good parenting, work capacity or leads to anti-social behaviour, violence or crime.
15. We are not aware of the evidence of health costs and the reset on benefits of alcohol is unclear and benefits will vary from person to person.
16. The direct costs are in relation to treatment of the effects of severe alcohol abuse and treatment of victims who have been injured by someone under the influence of alcohol. Indirect costs include stress in families caused by a family member being an alcoholic, mental health problems and the impact of domestic violence associated with alcohol abuse .
17. It is necessary to look at the underlying causes behind alcohol dependence as there is a lack of training in this area. Building self-confidence may help and there is evidence that brief counselling does help but it needs to be delivered in generic setting that are non-stigmatising.
18. There is a need for a big trial on this whole area in order to provide an evidence base.
19. Don't know.
20. There is a need for clear research into what works. For example with drug treatment it is evident that quick access is required when a user wants to receive treatment and ex-users are usually the best facilitators.
21. Make all glasses and bottles in pubs/clubs shatterproof, if they can be recycled. There is also a need for a clear message that pubs/clubs will be closed down if violence occurs and the CPS need to prosecute those involved in violence against A&E staff.
22. All CMHT staff to be trained in brief alcohol interventions. There is also a need for local services and for teams to be in close contact.

## Crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour: the effects on our surroundings and community

23. There is strong evidence about the links between alcohol and crime and alcohol and anti-social behaviour, which the Courts could provide.
24. Alcohol is a factor in habitual reoffending amongst young people particularly with regard to assaults, violence, public disorder, criminal damage and robbery. With older people it is a factor in relation to shop lifting.
25. See above.
26. Urban design is crucial. Urban design is crucial. If parts of towns are designed so only young people want to use them and people over 40 don't want to go near them (e.g. Cornmarket in Oxford voted the worst street in Britain) then there are no role models in the area to act as a moderating influence. Lighting is also crucial- clean well-lit areas discourage crime. Local authorities and planning departments should be held responsible. Local authorities also have powers to create no drinking zones, which should be used. In addition, other factors can include police behaviour and behaviour of door staff which can be misinterpreted when drunk, the number of people using an area eg when pubs/clubs turn out at the same time and lack of public toilets at night.
27. Urban environs are aimed mainly at young people with a focus on alcohol and dance. In rural areas the pubs close earlier, there is better age mix with a family focus and an emphasis on eating and drinking. It is therefore a quieter and more sociable environment and as there is a lack of public transport, there is a need to drive home. In addition people are less likely to be anti-social as if they are banned from the local pub in rural areas as there may be a lack of other establishments locally.
28. Toilet facilities; more waste bins; less packaging in fast food restaurants.
29. Yes, but it is inhibited by competition, lack of understanding of roles, opportunities and need for someone/agency to bring them together. Also emphasis is so often profit-related that there is little time to develop this sort of relationship.
30. Yes as young people often cause anti-social behaviour on residential estates.
31. Yes, drinking with food. Less noise so people can communicate, more variety of activities, less use of 'Happy Hours'.
32. The problem with drinking and urinating bylaws is enforcement with insufficient police officers. Even use of CCTV in town centres is not very effective, as information still needs to be passed to police and acted upon. In addition, it depends on what punishments are given out by Magistrates.
33. Yes, siting of pubs/clubs away from residential areas and making pub/club owners responsible for the behaviour of customers leaving establishment (providing transport/coming down time etc). In addition, noise levels should be rigorously enforced.
34. Making certain behaviour socially unacceptable as shame is a powerful agent. Discouraging macho image of drink and promoting more family friendly approach.
35. Alcohol is often involved in incidents of domestic violence. Possibly all offenders should be given alcohol counselling.

### The implications for vulnerable groups

36. Young people and children already at risk eg those looked after and those from families where adults abuse alcohol. However all young people are at risk due to the way alcohol is viewed in our society and a whole change in attitude is required.
37. Unemployed young men, housebound women and the homeless.
38. All the risk factors need to be understood, as they will all be inter-related. In addition, all vulnerable people should be asked what they want to do with their life and are supported to achieve it. They also need to be offered psychological support and treatment to help them overcome the problems that have lead to their present position
39. Community cafes with in-reach offered by services and YOT and young substance misuse services. Also too much government paperwork gets in the way of new initiatives involving others.
40. They require services that are tailored to their individual needs due to their complex nature and to avoid them getting lost in the system. In addition, vulnerable groups are better served by the voluntary sector that is more sensitive. Ex users are particularly potent therapists.

### Education and communication

41. The objective should be to change behaviour, but it probably needs to be aimed at the 10-35 age group, in order to try to create more responsible adults and better role models for future generations. Other objectives should be to make people feel that it is better to be fit and sexy rather than a drunk and to achieve this it would be better to persuade them to do something else rather than drink, than tell them not to do it. We have to remember that we are already giving a "drink" message by making it available on every street corner.
42. Don't know.
43. The message is not clear at all and is completely wrong as rather than focusing on sensible drinking from a health point of view, it would be more effective if it concentrated on the effect our behaviour is having on young people and our social responsibility to others.
44. Scientific research appears very flawed as the message keeps changing according to different research. As a result, we look for confirmation of our current drinking patterns ie positive messages to reinforce our current drinking patterns, whilst rejecting the negative messages on the grounds of flawed research.
45. Yes, parents, but in relation to educating their children.
46. Schools and colleges should have an alcohol policy and enforce it and we need to ensure that the same message is being provided, from wherever it comes.
47. Families and parents have a key responsibility in educating their children on sensible drinking and they should be engaged in this from the moment they become parents as young children pick up on the behaviour of their parents and what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Therefore this should be included in all parenting work and both Sure Start and Homestart could assist here.
48. Health focussed messages and those concentrating on scare tactics are not very successful. The most successful seem to be those that focus on social responsibility, the effects of our behaviour on others, principally our children and being a good citizen. However, if the Government allows alcohol

advertising then it will not be taken seriously if at the same time it tries to say alcohol is harmful particularly because of the gross amount of tax they collect on alcohol. This is one of the problems with the anti-smoking campaign.

49. We need to appreciate that the impossible is never going to be achieved, people are always going to abuse alcohol, but the best that can be done is to provide both the positive and negative factors and hope that a consistent message over time will help to modify behaviour.
50. There should either be no advertising or limits placed on advertising specifically targeted at young people.

#### The shape of the market and market-based solutions

51. It will probably become more targeted at young people due to the dance culture and the fact that young people are such a large part of the market.

52-54 Don't know.

55. Yes, employers

#### The economic cost benefits of alcohol

56-61 Don't know.