

Shifting The Culture

A response from Alastair Macleod

Chairman of Orkney Alcohol Counselling Service

6/5/12

Introduction

The basic premise in the report is right- to quote

“We recognise that a holistic and joined up long term approach to changing alcohol culture is essential, encompassing education, the health service, criminal justice and social work services as well as increased awareness to complement, but not replace, individual responsibility and good parenting. The equal emphasis on “justice” measures is an attempt to focus more on those who are failing to drink responsibly to ensure that they address their problem. “

Page 14 ; agree to tightening of **Quantity Discount Ban**

Page 15 **Public Interest and Child Protection**

Licensing Boards

Issuing guidance to licensing boards as currently set up will have little

effect

I feel that Licensing Boards are staffed with the wrong set of people ;they should have a majority from social work, health and police .At present they are weighted towards elected members and members of the licensed trade .

Thus when application for an extension to a license or a new license come in they tend to nod it through.

So there needs to be a fundamental change in the composition of Licensing Boards .

Reporting of Ministers to parliament has some merit but *better still* would be an “Alcohol Csar”

A minister responsible for alcohol harm reduction

Page 15 ; **Restrictions on Alcohol Marketing**

Agree with de-normalising alcohol for children but also feel that we need like we did with smoking make perceptions of alcohol change so that it is seen de normalised for all , not cool, harmful in excess, medicalise it.

Q4 Restrictions on Advertising ;agree

See end for further measure.

Q5 a pity about the radio and tv being reserved matters

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Q6 Caffeine Ban ;agree

Q7 Alcohol Education ;undoubtedly yes see end comments

Q8 Accountability of Ministers; yes but prefer a Minister for Alcohol

harm reduction

Q9 Not sure of under 21's we have a different concept of the age of majority in Scotland a lot of citizenship starts at 16 is 18 is a compromise.

I support a mandatory requirement for local authorities to have alcohol

free zones in towns and cities

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Q10 and Q11

Where the community has a drinks culture as is the case here in Orkney, community involvement to restrict or reduce drinking is not effective or considerably weakened.

For example our council could not see the point in introducing a ban on alcohol in public or alcohol free zones

The local licensing board extended an off license by 4 hours.

A strong central government push to reduce alcohol consumption must come with more central involvement and direction to be effective.

So I support in part the New Zealand model though a lot of their men drink in their huts out the back.

It is important that the make up of licensing boards be changed substantially and or/that licensing be taken out of the local control to effect meaningful change.

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Q12

I do not feel that a national licensing forum would be the way to go if it is

staffed with the same sort of members as local licensing boards. It would have to be staffed with social workers, health officials and police- not licensees and drinks companies . We must get straight to the kernel of this it is a public health issue and needs the same sort of approach as a serious virus.

Page 23

Yes **tag the bottles**

Page 24

Interesting , I am not aware of the licensing board here **varying the licensing hours** to *reduce* hours.

Q14

Fine Diversion sounds too easily open to abuse and who will do it ?

Page 25

Arrest Referral - yes worth a try

Attention and positive intervention which can also address underlying problems should be effective- but can GPs cope?

Page 26

Q16 Drinking Banning Orders; yes something like that is happening here, Pub watch and pub exclusions , and it is working very effectively- the pubs don't want these people anymore than the public do.

Page 28

Q17

Don't have enough knowledge of this but it sounds good is there the support here ?

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Q14

Alcohol Information Sharing

Simply yes and yes; but I can hear a lot of voices saying no . In a small community we all tend to know as it's in the local paper but certain individuals usually well connected professional with clout, keep under the radar, and sometimes even escape conviction ,so yes.

Final Comments

I feel this bill does not address the mountain to climb in changing the culture - it still tends to single out certain groups in the society.

Sadly drink pervades our culture at every level of society from top to bottom , in the professions, in the services, in the universities , in politics (nine bars in Westminster), in sport, across all classes .

Start by example eg go for no bar in the Parliament, no subsidised drink in the parliament. Also no drinks always provided at official functions by government and local authorities, no bars and cheap drink at universities.

Then tackle the public's perceptions of themselves created by advertising but principally radio and tv and film.

Tackle the Boasting Scot , (male and female) - the one who talks about getting wasted at the weekend and who thinks this is an achievement.

A few "drink is ugly brutish and cruel" adverts would be helpful.

end

Footnote;

Resources

The current government has allocated no extra resource to tackling

alcohol. If it really is seen as a priority then more resources are needed.

Our own organization had its budget cut by £20,000 this year yet we are overwhelmed with clients .

alastair macleod