



Policy Briefing: Public Information

Why do we need improved public information? In Scotland, alcohol-related deaths have increased 300% from 1991 to 2004. In Scotland, death rates for men (ages 45-64) from liver cirrhosis, is now greater than other European countries as well as England and Wales.

Alcohol was 62% more affordable in 2005 than in 1980(1). Consumption has also increased and it is known that the more affordable alcohol is, the more that consumption will increase (2). Currently, 2 in 5 men and 1 in 4 women are exceeding benchmarks.

In Scotland we have a culture of excess and we associate heavy drinking with having a good time. Off-licence sales are continually growing which means that home drinking is increasing. For some, this is part of a 'pre-loading' trend - drinking cheaply at home before heading out for the evening.

What is happening now? Currently, national campaigns are mainly targeted at the 18-24 year old age group who drink in pubs and clubs in city centres and towns. Whilst this is an important group who need to be made aware of the risks and harm caused by excessive consumption, it takes the focus away from all other age groups and those with a different lifestyle from this.

Harmful drinking is not simply restricted to younger age groups or 'girls and boys about town' so lifestyles and national campaigns must reflect the different lifestyles and age groups of harmful drinkers in Scotland.

We must get imaginative about distributing material to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of campaigns and not just pub goers.

The recent TV ad, '*Alcohol Don't Push It*' is a good attempt at taking the message to a wider and more diverse age group and we would consider this a useful starting point that could be built upon. Campaigns that can better inform people on the differences between safe and dangerous drinking levels will help people to think about reducing their consumption.

Alcohol Focus Scotland has worked with the National Union for Students to produce alcohol educational/awareness materials. Work must also be developed further with this important group.

Scotsman newspaper Opinion Poll 12/12/06 - Is it time for Scotland to sober up and press for change in the nation's attitude to booze?

- Yes – the drinking culture is getting out of hand 92% (576 votes)

Alcohol Focus Scotland is calling for a long-term campaign, supplemented by a programme of activities, highlighting the effects of alcohol-related harm across all age and social groupings.

(1) Index of affordability of alcohol: UK – ISD, 2007

(2) Tackling Alcohol-Related Problems – International Perspectives on Policy – University of Dundee, 2005