



# HM Government

Minutes of the Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group Meeting held  
at  
Conference Room 3a, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF on Friday 4th May  
at 2.00 (**Meeting 7**)

## PRESENT

Gus Jaspert, Head of Drugs and Alcohol (HO) (**In the chair**)  
Campbell Evans (Scotch Whisky Association), Alison Hadley (DfE), [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] (HO), [REDACTED] (DH), [REDACTED] (HO), Brigid Simmonds  
(BBPA), [REDACTED] (HMT), Scott Wilson (Molson Coors), Andrew Langford  
(British Liver Trust), Eric Appleby (Alcohol Concern), Rod Thomson (Dir of Public  
Health, Shropshire), Gavin Partington (WSTA), Bruce Ray (Bacardi), Phil  
Witcherley (Heineken), [REDACTED] (DEFRA)

## APOLOGIES

Zoe Dayan (BIS), [REDACTED] (BIS), David Scott (Morrisons), Elizabeth  
Woodeson (DH), Dr Nick Sheron (The British Association for the Study of the  
Liver), Ian Gilmore (Royal Liverpool University Hospitals), Jon Stoddart (ACPO),  
Dr Kieran Moriarty (British Society of Gastroenterology), Henry Ashworth  
(Portman Group), Chris Heffer (DH), Jacqui Kennedy (Birmingham City Council),  
Chris Sorek (Drinkaware)

## SECRETARY

[REDACTED] (HO)

### Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed all those present to the seventh meeting of the Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group. The Chair outlined the purpose and structure of the meeting – as set out in the agenda – and invited updates from attendees outside the Government. The Chair introduced [REDACTED] to the group as the new Head of the Alcohol Team.

### Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting

2. The Chair asked whether the group accepted the minutes from the last meeting. These were accepted and no amendments were offered. [REDACTED]

updated the group on the outstanding action point from the last meeting about work undertaken by Sue Robinson and Jacqui Kennedy. This concerned the identification sought by companies from recipients when delivering alcohol to houses to ensure the alcohol was not received by those under 18. Jacqui and Sue had spoken about the national audit of such companies. They were putting together a short questionnaire which would be sent to all trading standards and police licensing units in England and Wales. The objective was to gain an understanding of test purchasing activity and results as well as a greater understanding of the matters involved in the home delivery of alcohol. Sue and Jacqui were optimistic that they would have received sufficient responses prior to the next meeting of the group so that they could report back initial findings.

### **Item 3: Updates from the Home Office and the Department of Health on the Alcohol Strategy**

3. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] updated the group about the Strategy which had been published on 23 March. [REDACTED] explained that the Strategy set out a significant programme of work across Government, and locally, to reduce alcohol related crime and health harms. [REDACTED] outlined the key areas which the Strategy tackled. These included: pricing and promotions through minimum unit pricing, a ban 'multi-buy' promotions and the review of the Mandatory Code; giving areas the tools and powers to take the right action locally; shared responsibility with industry; and a focus on individual responsibility. The Strategy also aimed to introduce greater transparency in terms of how information on licensing could be made available and introduced innovative new work on the subject of sobriety.

4. Alongside this, it highlighted measures to share responsibility with the trade and reference was made to the Responsibility Deal and how we could go further, for example by more careful product placement of alcohol and ensuring that alcohol was not placed near items aimed at children. The Strategy also outlined industry commitments in the Responsibility Deal about labelling (including information about units).

5. Since the Strategy's publication in March there had been discussions with Ministers about the shape consultations should take. The Home Office intends to consult in the autumn and will provide further information on this in the coming weeks.

6. [REDACTED] provided the group with an update from a health perspective. DH would be providing a written submission to the HAC enquiry into the Alcohol Strategy on the health elements. Evidence from the department would not be published until the HAC committee report was published. The Government welcomed the pledge from industry to give consumers a wider choice of lower strength products in both the on-trade and the off-trade in order to take one

billion units out of the market by 2015. 34 companies had signed up to this and were expected to submit their implementation plans by 11 May. The plans would go on the Responsibility Deal's website and would be supplemented by annual updates and independent monitoring.

7. ██████ explained that DH was committed to carrying out a review of the weekly alcohol guidelines. The department was intent on undertaking a thorough review which would report on the risks of alcohol misuse.

8. Alison Hadley outlined the PSHE review by DfE and the intention to publish that in the summer term. DfE was supported by the Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT) to establish a repository of evidence based programmes and services to improve the outcomes for young people and share examples of best practice.

9. Gavin Partington asked for an update on the Mandatory Code review in relation to the commitment in the Strategy to determine how it could apply better to the off trade. The Home Office stated that it would be consulting on this in the forthcoming months.

10. Rod Thomson asked about PCCs and how they would know what their obligations for health were as public health had moved from the NHS to local authorities. He added that local economic partnerships and CSPs did not feature in the Strategy. He asked how the Strategy would develop to deal with alcohol related violence. Prof. Thomson was concerned that the funding available to areas was based on a cost per capita with the result that rural areas would suffer.

11. Eric Appleby asked about behavioural change and what research had been carried out in that regard – ██████ confirmed that behavioural science research around alcohol had been limited to date. As part of the new focus on public health in the Department, DH had been instrumental in setting up and funding a new Behaviour and Health Research Unit at Cambridge University. Part of the unit's work would be to look at behaviour change and alcohol. ██████ added that he would see if it would be possible for Prof. Theresa Marteau to update the group at a future meeting.

**Action: ██████ to see if it would be possible for Theresa Marteau at Cambridge University to speak to the group.**

12. Alison Hadley confirmed that while international rankings showed drinking among under 15 years olds in Britain had decreased, the drinking habits of girls fared rather less well in comparison. She added that the Children's and Young People's Strategy – led by the NHS - proposed that alcohol consumption among 15 year olds, as well as smoking among that age group, should be examined at the local authority level.

**Action: Alison Hadley to send the link of the international report to the group.**

13. Jonathan Shepherd added that a research study from the SIPs trials (the Screening and Intervention Programme for Sensible Drinking, funded by DH), which aimed to inform what approach should be taken to tackle 'at risk' groups presenting with certain conditions in primary care, would be published in the next 6-9 months.

14. [REDACTED] from DEFRA explained that he had discussed labelling with the Portman group. That had included discussion about lower strength beer. Brigid Simmonds added that alcoholic drinks could not be promoted on the basis of their strength.

15. Rod Thomson suggested that information about the number of calories in alcoholic drinks might produce interesting results. [REDACTED] explained that the EU was reviewing the area over the next 3 years and would then report back. Currently rules allowed for information within a defined format. The Strategy aimed to obtain more information from producers on labels. Bruce Ray suggested that too much information on a label could be missed by consumers. [REDACTED] confirmed that there was research suggesting that drinkers were checking labels for calorie information. Gavin Partington highlighted the risks of consumers switching to lower calorie drinks such as vodka. Phil Wicherley from Heineken added that beer stamps – to be introduced by HMRC - would reduce the space available for information.

**Action: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to pass information about labelling to [REDACTED] to circulate to the group.**

#### **Item 4 – Problem solving exercise – led by Jonathan Shepherd**

16. Jonathan Shepherd introduced a discussion on the following areas:

- The upselling of alcohol
- The sale of alcohol to those already drunk; and
- Related safety measures to protect those refusing to sell alcohol to those already drunk.

17. Jonathan began by emphasising that findings from the Alcohol Research Group concerning violence in England and Wales found that the number of people treated in England and Wales for alcohol related violence had fallen by 4% on the previous year. This continued a steady downward trend on the last few years.

18. He focused on up selling in the night time economy and evidence produced by the Medical Research Council. He added that a number of quotations from a large survey of bar staff revealed that many realised that although it was an offence to sell alcohol to a person who was drunk there was a strong likelihood that some of those in a pub would be drunk. Other survey findings suggested that managers encouraged staff to promote deals to drinkers which resulted in 'upselling' (for example, where a double was only an extra pound). 'Happy hours' featured reductions on alcoholic drinks but not so commonly on soft drinks. They also tended to last longer than an hour. The survey also found that 'Freshers' week' extended beyond the traditional week so that promotions ran for some time.

19. Jonathan suggested a number of solutions:

- the more successful managers found that a diversification of food, drink and entertainment helped their businesses but also helped to replace the central role of alcohol at entertainment in the evening;
- enforcing bans on irresponsible promotions;
- empowering and training bar staff – often bar staff thought security was door staff's responsibility, not theirs; and
- tackling promotions in supermarkets which enable people to cheaply pre-load.

#### **Discussion:**

20. Brigid Simmonds added that if a drinks promotion had an impact on the promotion of one of the licensing objectives then the police had the opportunity to take action against the premises. Where alcohol has been sold to drunk persons, there were powers to deal with the offence. She added that from a trade perspective, partnership arrangements worked best and gave the example of arrangements in which drunk people were looked after and provided with water if refused entry to a night club (for example by street pastors), rather than simply left to fend for themselves. Brigid clarified that the Nottingham Partnership had been set up amid safety concerns in the city and consisted of taxi marshalls, and street pastors.

21. Eric Appleby suggested that some behaviours needed to be challenged. For example, he considered Carnage (an organised pub crawl) to be contrary to the licensing objectives. Brigid added that while the Carnage event - or any event which promoted heavy drinking - was not something which BBPA condoned, the Nottingham event had been carefully controlled and perhaps ensured a degree of safety which might otherwise have been absent.

22. Bruce Ray explained that Bacardi had been advised by Prof. Mark Bellis about the sale to drunks offence. Despite the 3 recorded prosecutions in 2010, it

was recognised that the offence was more commonly committed than those figures suggested. A standardised approach to selling, in which retailers refused to sell to drunks, would result in a situation where shops and bars did not think they were losing business to less scrupulous sellers.

23. The Chair added that the Sobriety pilot, introduced in the Strategy, will make use of existing powers as part of Conditional Cautions and community sentence orders, for people convicted of alcohol-related crimes. Rod Thomson asked how it would be funded, what treatment would be provided and how the offender management would operate. The Chair added that it would focus on lower level offences such as drunk and disorderly, criminal damage and public disorder. The pilot areas for the conditional caution scheme included Westminster, St. Helens, Hull, Plymouth and Cardiff. The Strategy intended to end the notion that drinking is an unqualified right by piloting sobriety schemes for those people whose offending is linked to excessive alcohol consumption. In that regard, irresponsible promotions also needed to be challenged as they tended to encourage drinking more. The Chair added that the Home Office was examining this through its review of the Mandatory Code but was also looking to the industry to take the initiative on it.

24. The Chair added that there were measures to tackle the offence of the sale to drunks and that greater use needed to be made of those. For example, police were working with bars to prevent the sale of alcohol to drunks. Brigid added that the British Institute of Barkeepers produced guidance on [not] selling to drunks. It was also suggested that work could be done with the Home Office to raise awareness of the offence. Jonathan added that high levels of drunkenness led to concerns about public safety. Reducing the levels led to a greater diversity of people and entertainment in the city centre.

**Action: Brigid to share information with the Home Office on improving guidance for the offence.**

25. The group recognised that bar staff had concerns about their safety if they refused to sell alcohol to a person who was drunk. It was suggested that glass collectors could relay to bar staff the general picture of drunkenness and whether there were particular people who were drunk (this was relevant where a more sober person might buy alcohol for a drunk person). The Chair stressed that support needed to be there for staff who were put in a difficult position. Brigid added that she could provide figures on refused sales to underage buyers. The Chair gave an example of good practice in which a pub in Durham provided incentives to staff to refuse drunks or underage drinkers.

26. Jonathan referred to a graph entitled, 'Breath Alcohol Concentration and Staggering Gait'. He suggested that while door staff had improved their checks on entrants, there were still enough instances of drunk people being admitted to clubs to cause concern. He suggested that some bars were deemed to be run by

a head office which controlled the policy on pubs. He suggested that actors could be used to test bar staff. On the matter of staff safety, there could be role for the local Health and Safety Executive to play. Jonathan added that there were occasional injuries which bar staff suffered owing to glassware. He questioned whether alternative drinking vessels would help reduce the injuries. Brigid added that some pubs had conditions requiring them to use vessels other than glassware.

27. ██████████ confirmed that the Institute of Materials had been examining alternative drinking vessels. This was still very much at a 'work in progress' stage.

**Action: ██████████ to update the group at the next meeting with further information.**

#### **Item 5 Forward Look**

28. The Chair invited contributions to a forward look for the following meeting.

**Action: Eric Appleby agreed to lead a problem solving exercise about alcohol in the work place.**

**Action: Brigid to share with the group the work BBPA undertook with the police and others in regard to the European Championships.** This covered procedures on liaising with licensing authorities and matters such as staffing and controlling admissions in a sensible way.

**Action: ██████████ to ask if Theresa Marteau could present to the group about behaviours and to provide more information about alcohol strength labelling on drinks.**

Next meeting: 11 September 2012.