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# HM Government

Minutes of the Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group Meeting held  
at  
Conference Room 3a, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF on Monday 16<sup>th</sup>  
January at 1.30 (**Meeting 6**)

## PRESENT

Mandie Campbell, Director of Drugs, Alcohol and Community Safety Directorate  
(HO) (**In the chair**)

██████████ (Home Office), ██████████ (HMT), Brigid Simmonds  
(BBPA), Prof. Sir Ian Gilmore (Royal Liverpool University Hospital) Prof.  
Jonathan Shepherd (Cardiff University), Liz Nightingale (Royal College of  
Physicians), Jacqui Kennedy (Birmingham City Council), Sue Robinson (ACPO),  
Dr Kieran Moriarty (British Society of Gastroenterology), Eric Appleby (Alcohol  
Concern), Henry Ashworth (Portman Group), Chris Heffer (DH), ██████████  
(DH), Andrew Langford (British Liver Trust), Chris Sorek (Drinkaware), Bruce  
Ray (Bacardi), Gavin Partington (WSTA), Campbell Evans (Scotch Whisky  
Association), Phil Witcherley (Heineken), ██████████ (DEFRA)

## OBSERVERS

██████████ (Home Office), ██████████ (West Midlands Police)

## APOLOGIES

Zoe Dayan (BIS), ██████████, Grant Eastwood (Morrisons), Elizabeth  
Woodeson (DH), Nick Sheron (The British Association for the Study of the Liver),  
██████████ (DfE), Scott Wilson (Molson Coors), Jon Stoddart (ACPO)

## SECRETARY

██████████ (HO)

### Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. **The Chair** welcomed all those present to the sixth meeting of the Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group. The Chair set out the new structure for the meeting which would be developed as meetings progressed. She added that it would greatly help the meetings if members would propose agenda items some time in advance of the meeting and invited Jonathan

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Shepherd to lead on the following areas for the next joint problem solving exercise:

- the upselling of alcohol;
- the sale of alcohol to those already drunk; and
- related health and safety measures to protect those refusing to sell to drunks.

**Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting**

2. The group agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

Actions from the last meeting

1. Secretary to circulate Term of Reference for the working group. *Completed.*
2. Drinks trade to update the group with measures they were taking to shift the market away from very cheap drinks.

**Action: The Chair asked members from the drinks trade to update the Home Office outside the meeting.**

██████████ (HMT) updated the group about the minimum juice content for cider. In September 2010, a minimum juice content of 35% was introduced for cider. This would mean that cheap 'white cider' with a juice content under 35% would now be in a higher duty band. Andrew Langford was concerned that there was still very cheap alcohol available and action need to be taken to reduce this so that drinkers had to pay a higher price.

3. Work of the Technical Consultation Groups. *See item 3, Home Office update.*
4. HO to provide Brigid Simmonds with contact details for the government's RTC Champion for Tourism. *Completed.*
5. ██████████ to update the group about RTC. *See item 3 Home Office update.*
6. Chris Heffer to look at including CIPS as part of the Strategy. ██████████ *agreed that these would go in the alcohol strategy.*
7. Durham Constabulary to examine the profiling and test purchasing of online alcohol sales. *Sue Robinson updated the group in item 3.*

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8. Home Office to provide Alcohol Concern with contact details about Brighton's CIP.  
*Completed.*
9. Durham Constabulary to capture lessons learned by the police from the riots and share with Brigid Simmonds.  
*Sue Robinson would pass this to the Home Office to pass on.*
10. [REDACTED] to update the group about a) how we can encourage more CSPs to promote responsible behavior and how best practice can be shared; and b) how to help CSPs recognize the value of driving down crime and information sharing.

[REDACTED] explained that the Home Office had established an open and ongoing dialogue with the Security Industry Authority – the organization responsible for regulating the private security industry - and recently met a number of SIA approved door staff. Following this the Home Office sought the views of approved contractors who have shared a small amount of useful evidence which could be cited as examples of positive action. Additionally, the Community Safety Unit could provide an article for the Crime and Policing e-bulletin (which are circulated to CSPs). This would highlight potential opportunities/benefits in places where local circumstances fit. There might also be scope to put details of best practice on the Home Office website about approved SIA contractors and what they do).

### **Item 3: – updates from government departments to the group**

#### ACPO update:

3. Sue Robinson had contacted a number of supermarkets and 'Dial a drink' about their age verification policies and the amount of alcohol that would be left at an address. In the main, supermarkets had good training for delivery staff which included Challenge schemes (such as the Challenge 21 and 25 schemes). However, the guidance concerning the delivery of alcohol - when adults were not present at the time of delivery - needed improving. In terms of test purchasing, Sue suggested that legally there were problems in determining when a sale was made and this point was particularly relevant for proxy sales. Durham Constabulary planned to use an empty house for test purchases and would report back to the Home Office with their findings.

4. Reports from regional trading standards and the police suggested that in relation to home deliveries, age verification policies were not followed in 30-50% of cases. However, there was no data on pass and failure rates. Sue added that

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she and Jacqui Kennedy could compare test purchasing results in order to consider a national perspective for Trading Standards. Jacqui added that there was a trend in the West Midlands where vulnerable people made use of delivery services to receive alcohol.

**Action: Chris Sorek undertook to pass on details about test purchasing in the off trade.**

**Action: Sue and Jacqui to report at the next meeting with results.**

Home Office Update:

5. [REDACTED] confirmed the launch on 12<sup>th</sup> October of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee consultation. The proposed order would extend licensing hours on Friday, 1 June to 1am on Saturday, 2 June 2012 and on Saturday, 2 June to 1am on Sunday, 3 June 2012. The consultation closed on 1 December. The Order would be made by the end of February.

6. Kieran Moriarty suggested that the extension of opening hours during the Diamond Jubilee could lead to an influx of alcohol related problems leading to a strain on hospitals.

7. **The EMRO and late night levy consultation** was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> January and would close on 10<sup>th</sup> April. The Home Office welcomed views on this:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/late-night-drinking/>

8. Any questions should be directed to [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

9. A fees consultation to raise these in line with full cost recovery was likely to be launched in April or October. This would examine any cap on fees and is likely to be launched towards the end of 2012 with the aim of coming into force in April or October 2013.

10. **RTC:** Agreed to look at forms, including flexibility around TENs, flexible licensing for small businesses, and late night refreshment.

11. **Strategy:** The Home Secretary wanted an ambitious strategy to address the culture of drinking and associated disorder and one which would address the issue of excessive alcohol consumption.

12. **PRSR Act:** The remaining measures in the PRSR Act were likely to come into force in April subject to Ministerial agreement and parliamentary processes. This would include measures relating to TENs, health bodies as responsible bodies and the removal of the vicinity test.

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13. Ian Gilmore asked about developments surrounding the inclusion of health as a licensing objective. [REDACTED] confirmed that the Home Office would set out steps to tackle the issue of alcohol related social harms in the Government's forthcoming Alcohol Strategy.

14. Brigid Simmonds hoped that licensing authorities would consider those who applied for late TENSs.

DH update:

15. Chris Heffer confirmed the Strategy would be ambitious with a long term outlook. It was likely to be published during the first few months of 2012.

### **Alcohol Guidelines**

16. The Science and Technology committee recommended that the Government initiate a review, principally as it had been 16 years since the last review.

It outlined that:

- there was a lack of unit awareness and understanding among some;
- people should have 2 alcohol free days a week; and
- guidelines should be revised.

17. It also suggested evidence bases should be updated and the links to cancer, as well as any perceived health benefits, revisited.

18. There was a period of 2 months to respond and the response needed to be cleared across government. Given the procedures to review and consider the government responses and further consultation, it was likely that it would be 2 years before any guidelines were in place, assuming the Government accepted the recommendation.

### **Responsibility Deal**

19. There were 3 working groups. 1 was looking at alcohol strength. The nation drank approximately 50 billion units a year. The aim was to reduce this by 1-2 billion units.

20. Pledges were due to come into effect in supermarkets including one to move alcohol away from areas children's products.

21. Education and prevention included training bar staff about the offence of the sale of alcohol to drunks; it would also include education programmes in schools.

### **Alcohol Services**

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22. These were due to become the responsibility of local authorities from April 2013. This was being supported through the public health outcomes framework. Changes to admissions data would include only those admissions relating to primary coding at the point the admission was made to ensure figures relating to alcohol admissions were more accurate.

23. Ian Gilmore asked about the effect of changes to coding considerations. Chris Heffer suggested that DH could use data retrospectively to monitor admission trends. This would help prevent the distortion of admission figures caused by coding changes.

### **Discussion**

24. Brigid Simmonds provided data on beer strength. She suggested the average strength of beer available on the market was 4.2% and that that average had fallen in the last decade. Ian Gilmore suggested that the graph data showed a gradual rise since the 1970s.

**Action: Brigid Simmonds to provide data to show that strength had dropped since 2000.**

25. Jonathan Shepherd said that A&E attendance data was an accurate public health measure of violence. He said that only 1 in 6 people injured in violence who were treated in A & E were admitted to hospital - which was one among several disadvantages of the use of hospital admission data as a public health violence measure. He referred to the Coalition Commitment to "make" hospitals share A&E data for the purpose of violence prevention.

26. DH suggested it was possible for local hospitals to collect the data but it was not a national mandated measure.

#### HMT update:

27. ██████████ explained that HMT were working with the HO on alcohol pricing. Devolution raised a number of questions as did the Scotland Bill with regard to revenues for alcohol duty.

#### HMRC update:

28. ██████████ also confirmed that HMRC was considering whether to implement beer stamps (markings on beer).

#### DEFRA

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29. ██████████ outlined DEFRA's role which was in growth and sustainability (working with the industry). Specifically his remit included EU legislation and briefing Ministers on Minimum Unit Pricing and below cost sales as well as how those matters would affect industry.

**Item 4 Update on the unit awareness campaign in pubs, labeling on beer packs; and an update on environmental pledges (Brigid Simmonds).**

30. Unit awareness has been made available to all members of BBPA with the help of Bacardi. This applied to 51,000 pubs. Diageo were also helping to spread awareness as were Bacardi. This had to be seen in the context of the Science and Technology Committee's report which suggested that there was a lack of awareness and confusion about units. Nevertheless, 73% of beer bottles and cans contained unit awareness information; the target of all bottles and cans to be labelled was on track for the end of 2013. Bruce Ray confirmed that the unit awareness scheme would be gradually introduced to the off trade, including supermarkets and Waitrose had adopted it.

31. Alison Hadley suggested that it was difficult to adapt the concept of units to the type of drinking by children who swigged from a bottle. She also added that the smaller measures of alcohol, e.g. 125ml glasses of wine were not always on offered in pubs. ██████████ confirmed the Mandatory Licensing Conditions 2010 made it a legal requirement to make that measure available and that many more pubs were offering the smaller measure and making the choice clearer on menus. She clarified that licensing authorities were responsible for enforcing this. In response to Ian Gilmore's concern that pricing was disproportionately lower for the larger measures, ██████ confirmed that the Mandatory Conditions did not specify how prices should be applied.

32. Jonathan Shepherd was concerned that labelling might have little impact on alcohol misuse and that it could result in some people increasing their alcohol intake. The Chair suggested that labelling would have to be given time to take effect given that it had only recently been introduced.

Environmental commitments

33. The BBPA had 10 commitments to mitigate the effect of brewing on the environment. These were listed in the BBPA Environmental Commitments update which have been circulated with these minutes.

34. The majority of beer drunk in Britain was also produced in Britain, and the brewing sector had committed to reduce packaging waste through encouraging recycling.

35. The Chair asked when the first two of these commitments would be met (reducing carbon emissions and improving water efficiency).

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**Action: Brigid Simmonds to confirm.**

36. Gavin Partington made reference to WSTA's commitment to use light weight bottles and Campbell Evans outlined the Scotch Whiskey Association's water targets to be met in 2020 and 2050. [Further details of WSTA and SWA's environmental commitments are outlined in the links below].

<http://www.wsta.co.uk/environment-and-sustainability.html>

<http://www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/swa/files/EnvironmentalStrategy09.pdf>

37. Jonathan Shepherd said that with 30,000 violent incidents a year involving glass bottles and glasses, (according to the British Crime Survey), the use of alternatives to glass containers, such as polycarbonate glasses and multilayer PET bottles was an important harm reduction priority. He said that research showed that the chances of glass injury increased as the impact resistance of glassware decreased; stopping glasses breaking was key to harm reduction.

**Section 3: Joint problem solving exercise.**

**Item 5 What can we do to stop children buying alcohol? Introduced by Alison Hadley**

38. Alison outlined findings from the *Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2010* report (SDD10) and the report *Health Behaviour of School Age Children* which suggested a:

- **Steady rise** in proportion of pupils who had never drunk alcohol – from 39% in 2003 to 55% in 2010; and a
- **Fall** in proportion of pupils who drank alcohol in the last week – from 26% in 2001 to 13% in 2010.

**But**, there remained concerns about the amount consumed by those who did drink. The mean was 12.9 units among those who had drunk in the last week.

39. Alison outlined the continuing work on prevention which had been brought together in Positive for Youth (P4Y), the first cross-government strategy, published in December. Specific to alcohol education, was the Government's review of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) which looked at defining the core outcomes of PSHE and improving the quality of teaching. The review consultation closed on 30 November. Ministers would be making recommendations in the next 2-3 months.

40. P4Y highlighted the important role of out of school youth services in alcohol prevention, particularly for the most vulnerable young people. Alison Hadley

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explained that the DfE was developing a framework for youth services to measure their impact on personal and social development (for example, confidence and resilience) and links to risky behaviour such as alcohol misuse. Work was also underway to determine the financial gain of interventions – for example the impact on A & E departments. The DfE was also supporting the Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT) to establish a repository of evidence based programmes and services to improve young people's outcomes, including alcohol prevention. The repository would support local areas in evidence based commissioning.

41 Alison highlighted the importance of alcohol prevention work sitting in the context of the health reforms, with commissioning informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. She added that local authorities' new responsibility for public health, and the ring fenced public health grant, offered opportunities to strengthen prevention work.

42. While there was good progress in reducing the proportion of young people drinking, statistics from the SDD survey 2010 suggested that 48% of pupils who had ever drunk had bought alcohol. Of this group, 16% had bought alcohol from an off-licence and 12% from a shop or supermarket. While statistics indicated that there had been a fall in the numbers buying from off-licences, and those buying from pubs and bars – the success of which should be recognized – underage buying remained a problem.

43. The Chair sought the views of the group:

Gavin Partington suggested proxy purchasing was a big problem but also one which could be difficult to prove given that an adult could buy alcohol without the retailer knowing that he intended to buy it on behalf of a child. WSTA were working with retailers to make them more aware of the offence.

44. Sue Robinson suggested that many adults saw children getting drunk in places such as Newquay after exams as a right of passage – some parents saw the provision of alcohol to children as a 'social norm' in such circumstances. Work needed to be done to change this view and the Newquay Safe Partnership had worked hard to change the perceived acceptability of children drinking. It was an area Durham Constabulary focused on and she agreed that better messaging was needed to make premises more aware of the offence.

45. Jacquie Kennedy gave examples of proxy purchasing taking place in supermarket car parks. She added that as far as underage sales were concerned, retailers would only sell to children known to them and thus were difficult to catch in test purchase operations. Action could include recommending a licence review based on the balance of probabilities.

46. Ian Gilmore asked about the increase in the average amount drunk by those children who did drink. Alison Hadley added that while children of all social

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classes drank, those who drank at a younger age tended to come from poor families and those who began before 14 tended to perform badly at GCSEs, dropping 3 grades on average. Alison suggested that work was needed by all concerned to challenge the perception that most children did drink as statistics suggested those who drank regularly were in the minority. Asserting the correct social norm could take the pressure off young people to drink early. Parents – who provided children with alcohol in many cases – needed to be aware of this.

**Action: DfE to liaise with DH about how to tackle the perceived social norm that it was acceptable for children to drink**

**Action: Jacqui Kennedy to provide the Home Office with information to circulate about a Purple Flag scheme which addressed proxy purchasing.**

47. Gavin Partington asked why teachers had difficulty with the alcohol elements of PSHE lessons. Alison suggested that the Ofsted Report indicated that it was linked to concerns/guilt about their own drinking habits and appearing hypocritical.

**Action: DfE to report back to the group about how it could help teachers with this area.**

48. Jonathan Shepherd reported that breath analysis and interviews of almost 1,000 pedestrians in the Cardiff night time economy showed that in this setting very few children had been drinking: 0.35%, and that of this small percentage all were 16 or 17 and were mainly girls.

49. He suggested that 24 hours surveillance was the best means of capturing those committing the offence of selling to under 18s.

50. Kieran Moriarty added that the real concern for the health lobby was children obtaining very cheap alcohol. He wished to share best practice in prevention with the Home Office.

51. Henry Ashworth thought that employers could do more to make employees aware of the effects of drinking on health and their work. Best practice could be shared in this area.

## **AOB**

52. Henry Ashworth reminded the group of the Portman Group's consultation about the industry's code of practice and invited attendees to respond to it by 31<sup>st</sup> January.

[The link to this was circulated to the group on 20<sup>th</sup> January].

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53. The Chair announced that [REDACTED] was taking up a new position and thanked for her work while Head of Alcohol. [REDACTED] would be replaced by [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Next meeting: 2-4 pm, 4<sup>th</sup> May, conference room 3a.**

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