



## The Newsletter of apas

(Volume 6 Issue 2 – February 2004)

### National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

It now seems likely that the Government on March 12th will launch this long awaited strategy document. We aren't holding our breath, this has been promised since 1997. However, as we've been waiting and waiting for the launch date, and "holding the front page" of apas times because of that, here's a few things to consider.

There's also going to be a complete and long overdue overhaul of the Licensing Act. The opportunities presented must not be wasted. Interestingly, the local authorities are taking some notice of the alcohol services field – perhaps some officers were unaware of the consequences of the headlong rush to convert all old buildings into bars where people are encouraged to become intoxicated.

We championed the idea of a tax on each drink to pay for licensing enforcement and for prevention and treatment services. This has now been taken up by the Police and by some local authorities. One penny on a drink would make an enormous difference. Will this idea be taken up in the strategy, or is it too revolutionary?

Primary Care Trusts could usefully include alcohol in their local development plans. The advent of the new GP contracts will provide further opportunities for innovative work with problem drinkers.

On policing, if we did have 50 additional officers on duty in the centre of Nottingham, wouldn't that just remove a valid objection and thus enable some unscrupulous operators to push through their licensing applications. The answer lies in the concept of not how many bars there are, but in how well run they are. We would like to see a situation where fewer police resources are required to deal with the consequences of excessive consumption, and that remedy rests with the pub and club operators.

More on this, and more, when the strategy is launched. Meanwhile, don't forget that the proposed new Licensing Act overhauls all legislation, including the provision of entertainment. A licence will be needed to offer any form of public entertainment for profit.

**If you are concerned about the conduct of licensed premises, apas and the Nottinghamshire Police have a Fact sheet entitled "how to object to the grant or renewal of a licence". Call 0115 941 4747 for a free copy.**

email: [apas@apas.org.uk](mailto:apas@apas.org.uk)  
[www.apas.org.uk](http://www.apas.org.uk)

## Invited Article: Reducing Alcohol Harm – A Job for Who?

Great Britain is an island surrounded by water. Occasionally the island is flooded either because the sea breaks the local barrier or because there is so much rain that the water cannot get away quick enough. A similar analogy can be used for the way we as individuals use alcohol. There are times when our sea wall defences are breached and we become flooded, that is to say drunk, because of excessive consumption. At other times we might drink more than usual over a period of time and become flooded because our liver cannot get rid of the alcohol quickly enough, for example Christmas. But where we appear to be at odds with nature is that when the land is flooded there is often a period afterwards during which the land is allowed to dry out, there may even be a drought, however for some people using alcohol there is no period of drought prolonged or otherwise.

It is all well and good for organisations like **apas**, UK Alcohol Forum and the nursing and medical Royal Colleges to say that the daily maximum for a man is 4 units and a woman 3 units but this does not take into account the addictive nature of alcohol. Neither does it provide any barrier towards the constant drip of advertising. As with tobacco the drinks industry spends millions of pounds on advertising, whilst the treatment sector has thousands and if lucky tens of thousands to spend on prevention and cure.

The new Licensing Act due this year needs to take account of two conflicting elements if it is to have any affect on alcohol use. These are the addictive nature elements of alcohol and the drinking habits of the nation tied in with the commercial driving force of the drink producers. Clearly

there is a need for a balance between the positive elements of alcohol use for example social lubricant, legal drug, provider of employment, taxation for the government and the negative side which includes social disinhibitor, lethal in overdose, can isolate the user, cost to the National Health Service and resultant criminal activity. A stance has to come from the industry if the Government is not to be forced into draconian measures to protect the majority from the minority.

A couple of years ago I questioned why my local cinema was running adverts for alcohol before a film intended for children. The reply was that a) parents would be there and they were the target audience, b) the advert package came with the film, c) they were told to by head office and d) the law did not stop them from doing it. I put forward counter arguments to all of these in a hope that the local manager might reconsider. When I recently went to the cinema with my children similar alcohol adverts were still being shown. When I questioned the integrity of such actions I was again told that it was up to the parents to stop their children from drinking and was not a role of the cinema. That is just a cop out by the cinema chain, trying to abdicate their social responsibility by laying the blame if things go wrong, which they surely will, on the parents.

I accept that parents have a role to play in their children's alcohol education. However, if the message being put over by the parents is one of binge drinking or a bottle of wine each evening is acceptable then what hope is there for the child as it grows up.

The answer lies in the whole of society putting over a message that allows the person using alcohol to weigh up the positive side with the negative elements. A primary school child can be taught how to make decisions based on simple facts. However, it does require at that age for the messages to be continuous and consistent. The same may hold true for secondary school children. If one sector of society is busily selling the message that alcohol is good and failing to put over the message of sensible drinking then it is only a matter of time before the Government will be forced to intervene. The use of alcohol is a team message and the message has to be that alcohol has both good and bad sides. The sensible drinker is the person who weighs up both sides of the argument and ensures that they do not become flooded all the time.

**David Harding-Price RCN/RCGP  
Nurse Lead/Special Projects Manager  
Chairman Mental Health Practice Forum  
Royal College of Nursing  
and an apas member**

## **R U joined up?**

Why not become a member of **apas** and help us to reduce the harm caused by alcohol misuse.

For more information please contact:

Annemarie Sargeant on:  
0115 948 5570 ext. **48193** or email  
[annemarie@apas.org.uk](mailto:annemarie@apas.org.uk)

## **Information Services - Some Numbers to Consider**

The **apas** telephone Information and Advice service received 36 calls between 9.00 am and 1.00 pm last Thursday.

All but five were handled by our team of paid and unpaid staff; five callers left a message for us to call them back as the 'phones were engaged, and we did.

Of all of the calls that we receive just under a half are referred elsewhere, because of the particular needs that are discussed or for reasons more to do with geography.

Almost half of the calls are from people concerned about someone else. Nearly a quarter are from professionals concerned about their client and seeking information and advice.

We actively gather feedback from users of the service and we will gladly provide a summary to anyone who wants to see it. We are proud of the feedback that we receive; it is consistently full of praise. We get feedback forms returned to us daily.

**If you would like to know about the Information and Advice service then please contact us. Leave your details and we'll send you a summary of the feedback and a description of the service.**

## **Free Alcohol Awareness Training**

We receive countless requests for alcohol awareness training and, wherever we can, we deliver a session or sessions to meet the needs of the organisations contacting us. However, many **individuals** also seek training.

In the county we provide alcohol awareness training in partnership with the County DAAT training team. *The requests that we receive from people in the city are not so easily dealt with, so we have decided to offer some sessions here at our Park Row base.*

The sessions are free, although we ask for a £10 deposit refundable on attendance or if you cancel with 48 hours notice. This is simply to make sure that we can get as many people in as possible, without wasting spaces and places.

All you will need is a willingness to listen and learn, a sense of humour, and you must not attend if you've had a drink.

**Everyone will go away energised, enlightened, and with a "toolkit" to help you in the future.**

The dates are:

Tuesday June 8<sup>th</sup> 1.00pm -5.00 pm

Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 1.00pm

Thursday July 8<sup>th</sup> 3.00pm –7.00 pm

Please book by sending your name, address and telephone number, with a cheque for £10, to

**apas  
FREEPOST NG4824  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG1 1BR**

Alternatively, you can call Nick Tegerdine on 0115 941 4747 ext 48053 with your details.

Bookings will be confirmed when your deposit has been received.

## **Information Services from apas**

Don't forget that we are open until 7.00 pm and on Saturdays.

Our information and advice services are available to anyone concerned about any alcohol or drug related issue, whoever or wherever you are.

### **The service is free.**

A comprehensive series of Fact sheets are available.

Telephone and e-mail requests are welcome. **apas** direct provides a service to personal callers – no appointment necessary.

Tel: 0845 762 6316 and press 1  
email: [apas@apas.org.uk](mailto:apas@apas.org.uk)

Check out our website:  
[www.apas.org.uk](http://www.apas.org.uk)