



The **apas** Newsletter

(January 2005)

Drink driving – do you know what the penalties are?

This is a topical subject at this time of the year. Regrettably, the figures for the Christmas period indicate that again more people are taking the risk and driving when they've had a drink. We receive calls from people who have been arrested, and from their families. As well as the personal distress and possible loss of earnings that arise from drink driving, callers are asking "what are the maximum penalties?" The facts are these:

Refusing to provide a specimen of breath, blood or urine for analysis.

- 6 months in prison plus a fine of £5000 and a driving ban for at least 12 months.

In charge of a vehicle whilst over the legal limit or unfit through drink.

- 3 months in prison plus a fine of £2500 and a ban.

Driving or attempting to drive whilst above the legal limit or unfit through drink.

- 6 months in prison plus a £5000 fine and a ban for at least 12 months (3 years if you're convicted twice in ten years).

Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs.

- 14 years in prison, a minimum ban of two years and you will be required to take an extended driving test before you are allowed back on the road.

The simplest thing to do is, if you are driving, don't drink. There is no such thing as a safe limit for driving.

We welcome the Government's drink drive warning, which comes at a crucial time of year when, inevitably, people will be going out drinking more than usual. Previous campaigns to reduce drink-drive offences at Christmas have been successful, yet the rise in the death toll caused by drink driving again this year indicates that without a constant push from the Government on new drink-drive measures, drivers will continue to be complacent."

The above is the response of Geethika Jayatilaka, Director of policy and affairs at Alcohol Concern, to the Government's drink-drive campaign in December 2004.

"Nearly one in six of all deaths on the road are caused by drivers who are over the legal limit."

Young people and alcohol - a fundamental problem for local partnerships

Over the last few years the policies of local authorities and the avarice of the drinks industry have contributed to the present situation where 'yoof' drinking is identified as a major problem.

Young people have been enabled to drink more and stronger alcohol at younger ages because of the absence of effective enforcement of licensing laws and the preoccupation with illicit drugs. Once again, an example of the fact that 'the worst thing you can do is nothing'. Further, certain elements within the drinks industry have unashamedly targeted young people with products designed to be attractive to underage drinkers.

Together then, a situation has been created where young people are encouraged to set drinking habits that are difficult to change. Whilst society now appears to be concerned about the disorder issues that arise from excessive and inappropriate consumption, what about the health issues?

Evidence tells us that the younger someone starts drinking, and the stronger the drinks are that they consume, then the greater the likelihood of drink and drug problems in later life.

Are we to once again do the worst thing that we can do, nothing?

Fixed penalties for underage sales of alcohol

After many years of not exactly prioritising alcohol issues, the Police and Trading Standards have recently been rather active. Delighted as we are with these initiatives, we sincerely hope that this is not just a 'campaign' but a sustained effort to address the fact that too many licensees believe that they will get away with flouting the law.

Whilst licensee's are being reminded of their responsibilities, the position for those consuming alcohol whilst underage and for people supplying it (be they parents, friends, or members of the public) has caused some confusion.

Let's get the position clear:

It is an offence to purchase alcohol in off licences for underage drinkers. A fixed penalty notice may be applied.

Fixed penalty A notices apply if: you allow consumption by someone under 18; you sell to someone under 18; and, you are under 18 and you consume alcohol.

The same penalties also apply if: you deliver alcohol to under 18s or you allow the delivery of alcohol to under 18s.

For the record, this is 'old news' although some licensees would try and have you believe otherwise. The relevant legislation is the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (Amendment) and Police Reform Act 2002 (Modification) which came into force on November 1st 2004. The impact has already been felt by those working in pubs in Nottingham city centre. A police test purchasing 'sting' found that 10 out of 18 premises served a 15 year old. The servers will receive a fixed penalty notice. Presumably the licensees of those premises will be subject to caution or prosecution.

During the recent Ministerial visit to Nottingham, and when discussing the 'night time economy', our staff made the point that licensees are no longer in fear of losing their licences (evidence: how many revocations have there been in the last five years?) We were pleased that the Minister, Hazel Blears, agreed and we hope that the message will be heard both within the licensed trade and within the bodies responsible for enforcement.

Late Transport

Let's be realistic. People will try and get home when they've had a drink. We don't want them to drink and drive, so what are the alternatives?

Taxis? Clearly there are too few taxis to cope with the demand. The costs are also astonishingly high when compared with a recent trip from near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris all the way out to the Stade de France, at midnight. This cost our intrepid investigator £12. A trip from the city

centre to Stapleford costs the same (if you can get one). The message is simple – more taxis please, and let's get the pricing right.

Buses, trams and trains? There is some good news here. The late night services are improving, except on the trains (there aren't any local late services). NCT operates four 'Nightrider' bus services, and Trent and Barton operates eight late services. The last buses leave the city at 04.10. Late buses are now operating in Mansfield.

More services would be better (and, in Paris, the metro is free after midnight, to encourage revellers to get home safely). Nevertheless, to have more services, more people will have to use them.

Information@apas

For information about how to access alcohol and drug services in the East Midlands, please information@apas.org.uk or 0115 9414747 press 1

How to complain about the promotion of alcoholic drinks

The drinks industry has its own 'watchdog', The Portman Group. They have produced a Code of Practice and the public are encouraged to complain if they see a product that is in breach of the code.

The process is simple: write to The Portman Group (copy to us please), and describe the promotional activity, stating why you think it is in breach of the code. You can also visit www.portmangroup.org.uk and complete the on-line complaints form.

If you want to know more please contact **apas** – we can send you a copy of The Portman Group leaflet.

What does the code aim to do and what does it cover?

The code aims to ensure that drinks manufacturers promote their products responsibly. Clearly some manufacturers do not always do this, and The Portman Group have upheld a number of complaints from the public, leading to products being withdrawn in their current form.

A product might breach the code if its name, packaging or marketing:

- Does not make it clear that it contains alcohol;
- Appeals to under 18s;
- Emphasises the alcoholic strength unduly;
- Links the product with illicit drugs;

- Associates the product with sexual success;
- Suggests bravado, violence, dangerous or anti-social behaviour; Makes you think that by drinking it you will become popular or successful;
- Encourages illegal or irresponsible drinking, including 'binge' drinking and drink driving;
- Uses inappropriate images of people under 25;
- Suggests that it can improve your physical or mental performance.

The code does not apply to retailer promotions (including 'happy hours'), advertising (except at point of sale), text messages, and cocktails made and served on the premises.

Whilst we believe that the code does not go far enough, this is all we have at the moment. So, and using the usual **apas** quote 'the worst thing that you can do is nothing', if you are concerned about a product and its packaging or marketing, talk it over with us and we'll support your complaint to The Portman Group.

Unpaid work opportunities

apas needs you. To become involved and find out more, please contact Lesley at lesley@apas.org.uk Phone: 0115 948 5570 ext. 48054

Alcohol and Student Mood

James Ogram, 1st Year Undergraduate at Durham University. Having witnessed and indeed experienced the many pleasures and perils of alcohol within a single term at university, my own as well as others knowledge and perceptions of alcohol and its effects are always of interest to me. Moreover it is the psychological impacts of alcohol (for both drinkers and non-drinkers alike) that seems to be one of the most complex problems surrounding alcohol misuse. The article entitled 'Alcohol and Student Mood' in *The Quarterly Review of Alcohol Research* (Winter 2004) suggests a greater temporal aspect to differences in mood and behaviour between drinkers and non-drinkers.

A study involving 50 London undergraduates of which 21 were women, showed greater anxiety levels and aggression in non-drinkers through a series of cognitive tests. Alcohol diaries were used in conjunction with these tests to show that light or moderate drinkers were not impaired in terms of their cognitive skills compared with abstainers.

However, it was clear that non-drinkers responded to the tests with higher levels of somatic anxiety and aggressive mood than the consumers of alcohol. Increased levels of irritability, perspiration and feelings of hostility and quarrelsomeness were equally noted in non-drinkers.

It is well documented that alcohol can have a mitigating influence on stress in the immediate term, but in this case the test students abstained from alcohol for a day before the test began and from caffeine for three hours prior to commencing. Thus, this perhaps suggests that light to moderate drinking patterns over time can have a similar effect on stress and mood. The different responses to the tests certainly show an interesting pattern and perhaps pave the way for more research in this area.

But what is clear is the enormous potential impact of alcohol upon a student throughout the period of their degree. For many, student life revolves around alcohol intake during social events, while there is still huge pressure on many students to conform to the habits of others. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of university is managing this pressure and balancing alcohol intake and socialising with the more important aspect of university, the degree!

Watch this space James will be contributing regularly to the apas Newsletters on a variety of topics, including his perspective on the ups and downs of social and academic life at university. If you want to contact him about any aspect of alcohol and being a student, please email j.d.ogram@dur.ac.uk

Is it possible that a light to moderate intake of alcohol could reduce aggressive moods such as in the cartoon above.? What implications could this have on drinkers and policymakers alike?

Get Involved with apastimes

We want you to tell us what you would like to see in future editions of **apastimes**. What are the issues that matter to you and that you feel deserve more attention in this newsletter. The newsletter represents a fantastic opportunity for anyone to make their voice heard within the community, so why not share your ideas or even submit an article to Lesley at lesley@apas.org.uk There is no limit to space in the newsletter, so why not give it a try.

What's happening in the next year

We already very heavily committed, both locally and nationally. The activities listed are all income generating for the organisation and this is so important as it means that we will be able to maintain both the quality and availability of all services.

Drug awareness for housing officers - Birmingham, January

Conference on Alcohol & Disorder - Leicester, February

Drugs & Crime for probation staff - Leicester, February

Alcohol Awareness Training for the County DAAT - 3 dates in Autumn

Alcohol & Domestic Violence - Sunderland, November

In addition to these we are contributing to:

County DAAT Alcohol Conference - Nottingham, April

Healthy Choices Awareness sessions in schools - Broxtowe, May

Alcohol Awareness Training at apas - Nottingham, Various dates

apas volunteer Advice Worker training - Nottingham, September

Practice Learning Unit - we have eight student social workers on placement at the moment.

What else does apas contribute?

Some of these events are income generating people returning to work; people who themselves have experienced alcohol and drug problems; people seeking a career change; people working in voluntary and community organisations; anybody who wants to know something about alcohol, drugs and rock n' roll.

Through the income generating activities we add value to the statutory investment that we receive. The basic mathematics of the situation are that for every £1

invested we produce £1.75 worth of valuable work in the community.

If you want to know more about this 'added value' and how you can contribute, please contact Nick Tegerdine on 0115 941 4747 extension 48053.

For information about training events, please contact the Alcoline on 0115 941 4747 and press 1, or e-mail: information@apas.org.uk

Media activity over Christmas and the New Year

The campaign to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder continues to gather pace. Whilst supporting this wholeheartedly (indeed, we sowed a lot of seeds, including the idea of a 'penny on a pint' which is now being promoted by the police) we remain concerned about harm to the individual and her / his family, not merely harm to the community caused by disorder.

In pursuit of these twin objectives, we undertook a lot of media work during December, to the degree that staff have been asked for autographs! In case you didn't notice, we did: Extended TV interviews for BBC News 24 and Central Newsweek.

Radio pieces for BBC Radio Nottingham, BBC Radio Asian service, Humberside. Now who's going to argue with that and say that we don't make our voices heard?

Student drinking issues highlighted

We don't want to pour cold water on the opportunities presented to students during their first week at University, and we don't want to identify the institution in question. However, when a college renowned for academic excellence sees fit to close one of its bars after just two weeks of the term, it might be refreshing to detail some of the incidents that prompted such precipitous and costly action.

- Toilets filled with vomit, faeces and paper that, when cleaned, had glasses and bottles broken beneath the mound of human waste, which is a hazard to domestic staff
- Damage to college property caused by a minority of intoxicated students
- Vomit throughout the college premises
- Hassle for staff, porters, and other students

By the way, we are reliably informed that the information sent to all new students included an instruction to make sure that they brought along bottle openers and corkscrews because, "in the first few weeks, you'll need them". The college also sells very cheap drinks.

Responsible promotions? Responsible retailing? How are the staff trained? Notwithstanding the fact that drunken students must take responsibility for their own behaviour, will the college repeat the process next year, or will those responsible learn from the recent experiences?

We will let you know....

Wine for the kids with a meal?

This often crops up as a question along the lines of "the French encourage their kids to drink wine with a meal, can I do that?". There are two answers: the first is to do with whether or not responsible drinking results from introducing children to alcohol at an early age; the second is a legal issue, and that's what we'll look at here.

The Licensing Act 2003 changes the situation somewhat. It was perfectly OK in legal terms for an adult to buy a bottle of wine with a meal and give a glass to, say, a 14 year old family member. Under the new Act, it appears that the restaurant proprietor has to ascertain that the young person is aged 16 or over before they can be permitted to consume beer, wine and cider so long as it has been purchased by an adult.

In practice, restaurant staff will have to be aware of any diners under 18 (who cannot buy drink under any circumstances) and also those aged under 16 (who may not consume it under any circumstances). The maximum fine for staff has been increased to £5000.

The history of all this is to do with the concession in the law which allowed for young adults to buy beer, cider, perry or porter for consumption with a meal from the age of 16. This concession was

originally for apprentices, but specifically allowed for a sale to people under 18. There is now a total ban on sales to people aged under 18.

The old laws were not well understood in our experience (and that's not an apology for those licensees deliberately flouting them); however, the new situation adds confusion and difficulty to the roles of restaurant staff, who are frequently paid the minimum wage and offered precious little training.

Please let us know your experiences if you are working in a restaurant.

Inside the next issue.....

- Your letters
- Addressing alcohol issues in GP surgeries
- Implementation of the Alcohol Strategy
- Developments with the new Licensing Act
- City Council meeting to address night time economy—some reflections
- New: Police alcohol partnership group

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www.apas.org.uk

Opening Times

apas direct

Monday-Thursday 9.00am-6.30pm

Friday 9.00am-4.30pm

Saturday 9.00am-12.30pm

Alcoline Telephone Service:

Monday-Friday 9.00am-7.00pm

Saturday 9.00am-1.00pm

Answerphone service out of hours

36 Park Row

Nottingham

NG1 6GR

Make a Difference

By becoming a member of **apas** you can help to reduce the harm caused by alcohol misuse. For more information please contact Lesley on 0115 948 5570 ext. 48054 or e-mail lesley@apas.org.uk