

FACT SHEET SIX

ALCOHOL AND THE LAW

There are no laws against the possession or consumption of alcohol, provided you are in the right place, within permitted hours, and that the law says that you are old enough. The Public Order Act 1986 states that it is an offence to carry or possess alcohol on trains coaches or minibuses travelling to and from designated sporting events. Some towns and cities are now introducing local bylaws creating 'alcohol-free zones'.

Licensing Regulations

These are incredibly complicated in the United Kingdom at this time. There are however, basically, three types of licenses:

- 1) On licences. Public houses, hotels etc
- 2) Off licences. Alcohol brought under an off license cannot be consumed on the premises.
- 3) Restaurant licences. Here alcohol can only be consumed as an accompaniment to a meal

Age Restrictions

Again, this is an intensely complicated area. The following is given as a summary of the law

Age 5

It is an offence to give alcohol to a child under the age of 5, except on the recommendation of a medical practitioner

Age 14

Young children may enter a bar (defined as a place where alcohol is brought and consumed), but may not consume it themselves.

Age 16

May buy beer, cider or perry to drink with a meal not served at a bar.

Age 18

May legally purchase alcohol in a bar or from an off-licence.

Drinking Offences

The most common drinking offences recorded are as follows:

- 1) Being drunk in a public place (that included licensed premises)
- 2) Being drunk and disorderly
- 3) Driving while unfit to do so through alcohol

The unlicensed home brewing of beers, wines and ciders is permitted, but the products may not be sold. It is an offence to distil spirits without a licence