

## **Alcohol**

### **Driver – Political**

Related Drivers – Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbourhood Policing, Public Perceptions of Crime, Public Perceptions of the Police, Youth Crime, CCTV, Police Powers

#### **Background**

The relationship between alcohol and crime are interconnected with the trading and consumption of alcohol controlled by law and the loss of inhibition created by excessive consumption of alcohol can increase the risk of offending. Offences specific to alcohol include sale to the underage, intoxicated customers, bootlegging and selling of unlicensed alcohol, simple and aggravated drunkenness, and driving under the influence. In the most recent British Crime Survey, 45% of all victims of violence described their assailant as being under the influence of alcohol at the time.<sup>1</sup> Additionally alcohol related crime imposes a significant burden on the criminal justice system, to the tune of £7.3 billion of which £1.7bn in costs is incurred in response to specific and related alcohol offences.<sup>2</sup>

The Home Affairs Report published in November 2008 found that alcohol-related crime places a heavy burden on police resources and diverts officers away from dealing with other types of crime. During the evidence gathering for the review, the committee found a strong perception amongst police forces that alcohol related violence is on the increase.<sup>3</sup>

The Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-2011<sup>4</sup> includes the Public Service Agreement (PSA) Target 25, *Reduce the harm caused by Alcohol and Drugs*, which is being addressed through Governmental strategies such as ‘*Safe, Sensible Social – the next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy*’<sup>5</sup> and Youth Alcohol Action Plan<sup>6</sup>. Some of the measures introduced to achieve this reduction include:

- Home Office guidance and support for local area initiatives to reduce alcohol-related harm
- Ensure strategic regional coordination of the requirement for local partnerships to tackle alcohol related crime and disorder
- Development of a data collection model and further guidance on enforcement of underage sales
- Setting up an expert group, including the police, to gather further evidence of where targeted interventions might produce benefits and agree how high risk premises can be best identified
- Give police the powers to disperse under-18s who are drinking and behaving anti-socially from any location
- Extend the Directions to Leave power to include 10-15 year olds

- Extend alcohol arrest-referral pilots so that under-18s arrested for alcohol related offences benefit from a brief intervention with a trained worker
- Implement new legislation to make it an offence for under-18s to persistently possess alcohol in public places
- Establishing a new partnership with parents
- Encourage the police and other agencies to make greater use of Parenting Orders.<sup>5,6</sup>

The Government launched the consultation, '*Safe. Sensible. Social. Selling Alcohol Responsibly*' (which runs until 5 August 2009) proposes mandatory codes of practice for pubs, clubs, off-licences and supermarkets to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder.

The proposals contained in the consultation take a two-tiered approach with a small number of mandatory conditions for all alcohol retailers, which will ensure consistent good practice alongside new discretionary powers for local authorities to tackle problem premises where irresponsible drinking could put individuals at risk and lead to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Any premises that breach the mandatory code or local discretionary conditions that have been imposed will face a range of possible sanctions including losing their licence, having additional tough conditions imposed on their licence or, on summary conviction, a maximum £20,000 fine and/or six months imprisonment.

The proposed mandatory code of practice includes:

- Banning promotions such as "all you can drink for £10", speed drinking competitions and "dentist's chairs" where alcohol is dispensed directly into the mouth of any customer. These promotions encourage people to drink quickly or irresponsibly, can lead to crime or antisocial behaviour and make it impossible for people to keep track of the units consumed;
- Ensuring all bars, pubs and clubs offer alcohol in both measures so customers have the choice between a single or double measure of spirits and a large or small glass of wine; and
- Requiring alcohol retailers to display information about the alcohol unit content of drinks and for supermarkets and convenience stores, the health impacts of alcohol under powers from the Food Safety Act. This allows customers to make an informed decision about how much they drink and the effects on their own health.

As well as the mandatory conditions there are also a flexible secondary set of conditions that can be imposed by licensing authorities on two or more premises in one area where they are clearly associated with alcohol-related nuisance and disorder.

These conditions will enable local councils to take tough action in areas experiencing particularly high levels of alcohol-related disorder by imposing strict conditions to stop irresponsible promotions or practices and to ensure that premises are responsibly run.

Additional conditions for alcohol crime hotspots include:

- Restricting happy hours or "pub crawl" promotions at particular times most associated with alcohol-related crime and disorder:
- Banning irresponsible bulk buy promotions where for example a consumer must buy more than one 24 pack of lager to obtain a discount to reduce the risk of people drinking excessive amounts of alcohol at home then going out already drunk and causing crime and disorder
- Requiring staff to operate a Challenge 21 policy where anyone who may look under 21 must produce proof of age to buy alcohol
- Requiring licensed door staff to conduct checks for weapons and drugs at times most associated with alcohol-related crime and disorder
- Banning glass containers or ensuring glasses are collected at regular intervals to reduce the risk of violent incidents
- Ensuring that CCTV is in operation at times most associated with alcohol-related crime and disorder
- Display information on the location of public transport links and taxi numbers to help people get home safely.<sup>7</sup>

## **Potential Skills Needs**

**Community policing skills** – to discuss and set local priorities and encourage more people to become involved in crime reduction alongside operational policing tasks

**Communication skills** – effective communication between local partners and communities;

**Inter-agency working skills** – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

**Operational policing** – new powers to tackle alcohol misuse

**Multi-agency working skills** – to work with other agencies to tackle alcohol misuse

**Partnership working skills** – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

**Relationship building skills** – build effective relationships within the community

<sup>1</sup> Home Office (2008) *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*. London: Home Office.

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Office (2003) *Alcohol Harm Reduction Project: Interim Analytical Report*. London: Cabinet Office.

<sup>3</sup> [House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee \(2008\) 'Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' Seventh report of the 2007-08 session. HC 364-I, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [HM Treasury \(2007\). Meeting the Aspirations of the British People: 2007 Pre-budget report and Comprehensive Spending Review. London: HM Treasury.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [HM Government \(2007\) \*Safe, Sensible Social – the next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy\*. London: Department of Health.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Department of Health, Home Office & Department for Children, Families and Schools \(2008\) \*Youth Alcohol Action Plan\*. Cm 7387, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Home Office \(2009\) Consultation: \*Safe. Sensible. Social. Selling Alcohol Responsibly\*. Publication Date: 13 May 2009, End Date: 5 August 2009.](#)