

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 14 JUNE 2001**

### **CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL PLAN FOR ALCOHOL MISUSE**

#### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the Scottish Executive Consultation Paper on a Plan for Action on Alcohol Abuse.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the draft response prepared by officers on behalf of the Council.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 People can experience addiction or dependency problems with alcohol, drugs, solvents/volatile substances, smoking and gambling. Often an addiction problem can include a combination of these or can exist alongside mental health problems (dual diagnosis).
- 2.2 As well as the effects (both social and health related) on the individual, there is also a significant impact on family, carers and the community at large. Addiction can be a significant factor in mental breakdown, homelessness, financial difficulties/poverty and criminal behaviour.
- 2.3 Whilst tackling drug misuse has been identified as a priority by the Scottish Executive, it is also recognised that the impact of alcohol misuse upon society is significantly greater.
- 2.4 The Adult Health and Lifestyle Survey (Ayrshire and Arran Health Board 1998) identified the following:
  - 34% of males and 16% of females claimed to have drunk more than the recommended safe limit in the last week.
  - 8% of men and 3% of women had been advised to cut down their alcohol consumption.
- 2.5 An Ayrshire wide strategic response to the issue of alcohol misuse is co-ordinated via Ayrshire and Arran Alcohol and Drug Action Team of which the Council is a corporate member.
- 2.6 Alcohol misuse has a significant impact on society and is a factor in the lives of a high proportion of individuals receiving services from Criminal Justice and Children and Families Social Work teams.

2.7 Counselling and support services to people with alcohol problems within East Ayrshire are currently provided by Ayrshire Council on Alcohol and the Bridge Project under the terms of Service Level Agreements with the Council.

### **3. CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE PLAN FOR ACTION ON ALCOHOL MISUSE**

3.1 The Scottish Executive has intimated its intention to co-ordinate a shared National Plan for Alcohol Misuse.

3.2 It has launched a consultation exercise with a wide range of individuals and organisations (including local authorities) to identify the following:

- What is causing concern amongst organisations and individuals about drinking in Scotland;
- What needs to be done by all concerned;
- What organisations can contribute as part of an agreed Plan for Action.

3.3 In order to achieve its objectives the Scottish Executive is consulting on specific questions which are detailed in the Appendix to this report.

### **4. PROPOSED RESPONSE FROM THE COUNCIL**

4.1 The views of relevant Council departments and key partners have been canvassed in order to produce a draft response to the Scottish Executive.

4.2 These have been collated into a composite draft response which is attached as an Appendix to this report.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Nil.

### **6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Nil.

### **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Approves the draft response to the Scottish Executive as set out in the appendix to this report; and
- (ii) Agrees that the Council response be remitted to Ayrshire and Arran Alcohol and Drug Action Team and CoSLA for the purpose of informing their responses to the consultation.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

29 May 2001  
Enc (1)

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Consultation Paper on Plan for Action on Alcohol Misuse.
2. Ayrshire and Arran Alcohol and Drug Action Team Action Plan

Members wishing further information on this report please contact Andy Macdonald, Service Unit Manager Quality and Planning, Civic Centre South, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, Telephone: 01563 576991.

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: ANDY MACDONALD**

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DRAFT RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER ON  
PLAN FOR ACTION ON ALCOHOL MISUSE**

**Question 1: How should we define alcohol misuse?**

- When the quantity consumed daily or weekly directly or indirectly affects a person in a negative or harmful manner.
- Personal circumstances including age, sex, financial status and health should be taken into consideration.
- The consequences of individuals' actions whilst under the influence of alcohol and in obtaining alcohol (both physically and financially) should be taken into consideration.

**Question 2: What concerns you most about current patterns and trends in drinking in Scotland?**

- The 33% of men and 15% of women exceeding the currently recognised safe limits has a significant impact on local authority service provision.
- The rise in the proportion of children and young people who report that they are regular consumers of alcohol reflects the consequent potential for developing alcohol related problems in later life.
- The targeting of young people and women through marketing campaigns reinforces this concern.
- Alcohol is a contributory factor in a high proportion of crimes committed by young offenders.
- Alcohol is a contributory factor in a high proportion of domestic abuse incidents.
- Alcohol related deaths have more than doubled in Scotland since 1990 a trend consistent in both males and females.
- The perception that drugs are a bigger problem than alcohol abuse is misleading given that alcohol misuse causes significantly more domestic and social problems than drug abuse.
- The increase in the availability of alcopops/strong ciders/beers has the potential to further increase existing alcohol misuse levels.

- The increase in the number of 'super pubs' supplying cheap alcohol also contributes to this problem.

**Question 3: Are there priority groups or individuals whose drinking we should try to influence in the Plan for Action?**

The following groups have been identified as priorities within the Ayrshire and Arran Alcohol and Drug Action Team Action Plan.

- Children and young people,
- Women,
- The over 60's

**Question 4: What specific objectives, and activities designed to achieve these, would you like to see in the national Plan for Action?**

- Initiatives such as Scotland's Health and Work (SHAW) should be encouraged in the workplace in order to highlight the dangers of alcohol abuse.
- Further development of counselling and support services.
- Increase in dedicated services available to children and young people
- Development of services which reflect the needs of women
- To introduce training programmes for teachers and carers.
- To introduce statutory training and licensing of door stewards deployed at licensed premises.
- To introduce statutory training for licensees and licence trade staff.
- Promotion of alternative activities for young people.

**Question 5: Would you like to see changes in aspects of the law relevant to misuse of alcohol?**

- Drink driving – consideration should be given to revising blood/alcohol limits downwards
- Consideration should be given to strengthening bye laws relating to control of the use of alcohol in public places
- Confiscation of all alcohol in possession of anyone charged with such offences
- Promotion of increased use of disposals from Courts which include an element of counselling and support.

**Question 6: Of the objectives you suggest at Question 4, which require action (either single or jointly) by Government, statutory bodies, industry, employers, communities, individuals or others?**

- Addressing all of the objectives requires a multi-agency approach involving communities, central and local government, health, police, business etc.

**Question 7: What gaps do you identify in action that is currently being taken?**

- Resources for the development of alcohol specific counselling and support services should be increased.
- Resources require to be identified and targeted at rehabilitation initiatives to facilitate access to employment, education and recreational pursuits by individuals who are addressing problems of alcohol misuse
- Consideration should be given on a national basis to the further promotion and development of proof of age schemes.
- Police should have greater powers for dealing with underage drinking.
- The need for stronger penalties on those selling cheap alcohol from abroad.

**Question 8: What can your organisation or sector do to address the gaps?**

- Support a Proof of Age Scheme.
- Support licensing boards in legislation.
- Raise awareness as to the dangers of alcohol.
- Work with schools and other organisations to help educate and prevent under age drinking.
- Support Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW).
- Facilitate the provision of counselling and support services subject to availability of funding.
- Facilitate the provision of rehabilitation initiatives subject to the availability of funding.

**Question 9: What support structures will be needed to deliver the national Plan for Action?**

- The Scottish Executive and all major statutory agencies must support the Plan.
- If the Plan is to be delivered there must be funding set aside for this through both Local Authorities and Health Boards.
- Service developments should be planned and delivered on a multi agency basis at a local level via Alcohol Misuse Co-ordinating Committees (AMCCs) or where they exist, Alcohol and Drug Action Teams (ADATs).

**Question 10: What measures should be taken to ensure that the general public and specific groups get information about the national Plan for Action when it is ready, from your organisation and your own organisation or from others?**

- Statutory, voluntary and community groups should be advised of the Plan and the measures that are being taken to implement it.
- Individuals should be encouraged to comment on the Plan (where they are not a member of the specific group). It should be widely publicised through every possible medium.
- Appropriate resources should be identified now to ensure the public get the information. National and local media coverage should precede the launch and the Plan for Action should be made available free of charge in a variety of community venues.
- Finance must be made available to ensure adequate publicity can be targeted at the public and specific groups.

**Question 11: How should all concerned be held accountable for what they do under the Plan for Action?**

- Everyone involved in the Implementation of the Plan at a strategic level should be accountable via AMCCs or ADATs.

**AGENDA**