Community Alcohol Partnerships: Cracking Down on Public Under-age Drinking

The RASG Guide to Tackling Nuisance and Antisocial Behaviour
Earlier this year when the Government published the Youth Alcohol Action Plan, we made clear that we wanted to see further roll out of the scheme that has worked so well in parts of Cambridgeshire. This guide will help other areas build on that success by highlighting the importance of partnership working in tackling unacceptable underage sales. I am delighted that the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group has recognised the important role that industry have to play and the actions they are taking to make this a reality.

I support the focus of the Community Alcohol Partnership model on education, public perception and enforcement. The Youth Alcohol Action Plan recognises that alcohol education in schools is crucial. Work undertaken by the Community Alcohol Partnership can complement this, particularly in delivering a partnership approach to education on the legal implications of underage and proxy sales. In terms of public perception, drinking by young people in the streets and other public areas is a real concern. Many adults associate this with anti-social behaviour.

The Community Alcohol Partnership’s suggested approach to communication is right: communicating success to the media can help combat the public’s concerns. Such work might also contribute to a reduction in the proportion of the public who see drunk, rowdy or anti-social behaviour to be a problem. The focus on enforcement is particularly important; it is right that all licensed premises comply with the law and we are determined to see that the law is enforced. In support of this, I welcome the guidance’s advice to identify hotspots – Community Alcohol Partnership’s work in this respect can help in the targeting of enforcement activities.

Community Alcohol Partnerships coupled with effective, tough enforcement will help drive down the illegal sale of alcohol to under 18s and by doing so, will make communities a more pleasant, and safer, place to live.

Alan Campbell MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for

From problem.....

Underage drinking
Proxy purchasing
Antisocial behaviour
Pressures on health Service
Crime and disorder

...to solution

Positive outcomes within budget
Safer communities
Cultural change
Education
Working in partnership
Key Outcomes:

The benefits of the Cambridgeshire CAP are still being seen. The pilot project has now become a permanent fixture. Since its inception the scheme has delivered the following:

- 42 per cent decrease in anti-social behaviour incidents in the St Neots area from August 2007 (pre-project) to February 2008 (post-project)
- 94 per cent decrease in under-age people found in possession of alcohol
- 92 per cent decrease in alcohol-related litter at key hotspot area
- Amount of alcohol found on young people in St Neots was significantly lower than expected or in comparison with similar locations, such as Huntingdon
- Alcohol-related litter counts significantly down in original ‘hot spot’ areas
- Significantly lower levels of alcohol had been confiscated in the St Neots area compared with other districts of Cambridgeshire
- No new hot spot problem areas created (i.e. no ‘balloon’ effect)
- Changed enforcement activity was cost-neutral
- Better relationship between retailers and enforcers
- Public perception that public spaces were more pleasant than previously – cleaner and fewer incidents of group drinking
The Cambridgeshire pilot Community Alcohol Partnership:

‘Shop staff have acted as our colleagues on the frontline and helped us to really bring home the impact of under-age drinking to the youngsters. We are never going to be able to cure under-age drinking completely but we believe with this scheme we can make a real difference. We hope that our work in St Neots will act as a blueprint for launching CAPs across Cambridgeshire and beyond.’
Leon Livermore, Head of Cambridgeshire Trading Standards

‘This is the new way of doing business, it’s the way forward and it’s not going to change. This is about the long term health of our children.’
Mark Hopkins, Assistant Chief Constable, Cambridgeshire Constabulary

‘It is simply a new way of working, firstly in joint patrols and activities with Trading Standards, secondly bringing retailers on board rather than making them the enemy. It is about intelligence gathering as much as enforcement, and is revenue neutral. It does not cost any extra money; it is just a smarter way of working, rather than increased work. …We will continue to run patrols as it’s what the community has asked for.’
‘We view that as very positive, the message has got across that we are out there and that it is not acceptable for young people to be out on the street drinking.’
Mark Woolner, St Neots and District Police Inspector

‘Tackling public under-age drinking is a major concern for communities who have to suffer the criminal damage and fear of crime that it causes – not to mention the harm to a young person’s health caused by alcohol consumption. This has been the first time in the country that such a joint approach has been piloted and our initial results show it has been positive. The main thing to take from this is that each individual element is not innovative, but the way we have all taken responsibility and brought a holistic approach to the problem has had the greatest effect.

‘There was a lot of groundwork done, emphasising that there are not a lot of resources required but there is a lot that can be achieved resulted in very positive engagement by a large number of partners. There are no additional costs incurred. We are not asking the police to do anything out of the ordinary or require extra staff or overtime, the schools are more than happy for visits to be made as part of their ‘Every Child Matters’ requirements.’
Charlotte Wilson, Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards
Who are RASG?
The Retail of Alcohol Standards Group (RASG)* was set up in 2005. High street competitors came together for the first time to share best practice and common signage. Their first objective was to drive down under age sales. They are proud of their success.

The Government has publicly welcomed the fall in illegal sales but we at RASG have not been complacent. More than ever we need to be in the forefront of the campaign to stop young people from drinking in public and causing social nuisance.

The day to day management of RASG is provided by the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA).

What can we offer?
The demand for alcohol by young people shows no sign of abating. We estimate that pubs and off licences are currently refusing sales to around 1.5 million young people who can’t prove they are over 18. But we also know that many young people get alcohol from parents, older friends or relatives. RASG believes that the problems around young people drinking in public and causing a nuisance can only be tackled holistically and in partnership. We have been working with other partners on a pilot project in St Neots, Cambridgeshire (see Annex B) and this pilot was a resounding success. It engineered cultural change, bringing all key partners together, working to focus all their activities on the wider problems of under-age drinking.

For the Cambridgeshire Trading Standards Team this led to the award for better regulation at last year’s National Business Awards.

The Cambridgeshire approach ensured that non RASG members were quickly locked into the new model. This new approach will be the only successful way of ensuring complete retailer involvement and co-operation. Without serious and well publicised commitment, holistic solutions will not be found to tackle public under age drinking.

Towns and cities will have differing demographic and social problems - but the key principles in this toolkit are transferable to all towns and cities.

Overarching everything is the need to bed in genuine partnership working.........

*Annex A lists RASG member companies and key contacts
Where to begin?

Consider who would be your key partners and ensure they both are and feel on an equal footing - you can identify these from:

- Retailers
- Local Authorities
- Constituency MP
- Schools
- Police
- Trading Standards
- Voluntary sector Organisations
- Wider Community groups

Get early buy in........

Call a meeting for all parties. Propose new ways of working which include all key partners.

Highlight the three key components

- Education
- Public Perception
- Enforcement

Outline the measurement criteria and aim to

- work together to further reduce alcohol sales to minors
- enhance enforcement activities in hotspots to tackle attempted and proxy purchasing
- complement these with effective education
You will achieve

• new and sustainable ways of working
• more effective working relations between all the stakeholders
• the opportunity for stakeholders to better serve their communities
• a new perception that checkout staff are a key part of the solution (not part of the problem)
• a change in public perception

This will lead to
• enhanced enforcement of hot spots
• a reduction in related crime and disorder issues
• a reduction in harm to society and its victims
• no significant increase in enforcement costs

Enhanced enforcement of hot spots (as opposed to test purchasing in stores) can deliver better outcomes within budget.

Better regulation delivers better outcomes - it gets your town noticed for the right reasons.

Focus on the three Key Components (EPPE)

Education
• offer support to Schools alcohol PHSE modules - include Trading Standards and checkout staff visits to discuss the legal consequences of under age purchasing
• develop and distribute healthy drinking leaflets (Annex C provides a template)

Public Perception
• contact the editor of your largest local circulation and offer them the story. Offer positive story lines over a number of weeks to get them to champion the project
• prepare bulletins for the MP and local councillors - they all like to be a part of a success story. Speaking to local councillors also informs the School Governor Community

Enforcement
• ensure enforcement is visible and joined up, targeting the demand not just the sale
• identify and map out hot spot areas and work with stores to gather good intelligence and information flows
Demonstrate measurable gains

Tackling young people’s drinking problems is a high priority and it’s a measurable indicator of success in terms of a town’s local area agreement (LAA). Delivering better outcomes will demonstrate that change is happening, to the wider business and residential communities.

Gather simple benchmarking evidence such as:

- alcohol-related litter counts in hot spot areas
- cautions/prosecutions for proxy purchase
- confiscations of alcohol from young drinkers

Repeat this at regular intervals.

Seize on qualitative data such as the perceptions of interested groups (retailers, young people, residents etc.) about alcohol related nuisance.

Build a new relationship with Retailers

Annex D gives you a template for an agreement between retailers and statutory authorities.

Your relationship with retailers based on trust and the free flow of information and intelligence will be crucial to ensuring sustainability.

Engender long term benefits to the whole community.
Annex A

Members of RASG (Retail of Alcohol Standards Group)

This list is provided to ensure that enforcement officers from all agencies have at hand direct contact details for senior representatives from RASG member companies. The contacts below have all committed to taking speedy action to resolve problems in any of their stores.

RASG is supported by the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA). Any further advice or information may be obtained from Sarah Davis or Stephen Hogg by telephoning 020 7089 3877 or by emailing sarah@wsta.co.uk or Stephen@wsta.co.uk

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### Annex A

**Members of RASG (Retail of Alcohol Standards Group)**

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Annex B

Case Study: St Neots Community Alcohol Partnership

**St Neots pilot area profile:**

- **Pilot area:** St Neots, Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford, Eynesbury, Little Paxton
- **Population:** Approx 30585 (2001 census)
- **Area:** 4708 hectares
- **Young people (age 10-17):** 3195 (10.4%)
- **Secondary schools:** St Neots Community College & Longsands College
- **Facilities for young people:** Eat ‘n’ Bowl, Skateboard Park, Youth Club, Leisure Centre
- **Neighbourhood Policing:** Eynesbury Team and St Neots & District Team
- **Off licences:** 20 – from small independents to large national retailers

**Background**

St Neots is a typical, English market town. Situated to the West of Cambridgeshire on the Bedfordshire border, it lies on the banks of the river Great Ouse. St Neots has a number of parks and recreation grounds. The Riverside Park has a car-park, café, skateboard park and children's play area where young people like to gather. There are 20 different off-licence premises in the town ranging from a national superstore on the outskirts, down to several small independent retailers.

At the commencement of the CAP pilot in September 2007, the priorities for the 2 Neighbourhood Policing Teams, as decided by public consultation at Neighbourhood Panel Meetings were:

**St Neots and District**

1. Duloe Brook/Baron Court/Queens Gardens, Eaton Socon – Youth related anti-social behaviour (ASB)
2. High Street/St James Road, Little Paxton, ASB
3. Speeding B645 (rural areas outside of pilot area)
Eynesbury

1. Manor Estate / Parklands, ASB
2. St Neots Community College / Recreation site, ASB and criminal damage
3. Duck Lane / Hen Brook Youth Related Disorder

Clearly there was a perception amongst the Community, Police and Local Authorities that there was a problem with anti-social behaviour and youth related disorder – much of which could be associated with underage alcohol consumption. Adding to this the negative effects on the health of young people participating in underage drinking, it was clear that something needed to be done.

CAP pilot

The CAP was launched on 11th September 2007 with these objectives:

- Reducing harm to society and victims (including young drinkers)
- Delivering cultural change within Cambridgeshire
- Challenging and changing public perceptions

Partners

St Neots CAP was led by Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards but involved all of the town's off-licence retailers, the Police, local authorities, local secondary schools and youth clubs, Drinksense, the community and the local press (Hunts Post and St Neots Town Crier).

CAP approaches

CAP took three main approaches to tackle the issue of underage drinking in St Neots:

Education

- **Police** and **Trading Standards** provided education to all year groups at **St Neots Community College** and **Longsands College** about the law relating to young people and alcohol and the penalties for committing crime. These sessions were run in assemblies or Every Child Matters lessons. The students were made aware of the CAP enforcement activities (see below).

- Informal drop-in sessions at the local **Youth Club** took place.

- **Drinksense** (a locally based charity) facilitated an alcohol awareness workshop at Longsands College. The session was run for parents of pupils at both Longsands and St Neots Community College, with both schools sending out a mailshot invitation to parents of their pupils.

- Leaflets produced in partnership with **Cambridgeshire County Council, RASG, Police** and **Drinksense** for retailers to give to every purchaser of alcohol (explaining the harm of and law relating to underage alcohol consumption and proxy purchasing)
Annex B

Case Study: St Neots Community Alcohol Partnership

Enforcement

- **Police** and **Cambridgeshire County Council** regular patrols of hotspot areas, confiscating alcohol from under 18s.

- **Retailers** provided with telephone numbers of **Trading Standards** and **Police** staff at times of enforcement operations to immediately report alleged offenders.

- **Trading Standards** working with store managers and positioning themselves in **retail outlets** to advise any alleged offenders (young people or proxy purchasers) of the reason their purchase was refused.

Public Perception

- **The Hunts Post** and the **St Neots Town Crier** were provided with regular CAP news stories that built community confidence and helped alter public perception of underage drinking in St Neots.

Learnings

- Alcohol-related litter counts significantly down in original hot spot areas.

- Recent Cambridgeshire Confiscation campaign showed significantly lower levels of alcohol had been confiscated in the St Neots area compared with other districts of Cambridgeshire.

- No shift in problems creating new 'hot spot' problem areas.

- Changed enforcement activity cost-neutral.

- Better relationship between retailers and enforcers.

- Public perception that public spaces are pleasanter than previously as they are cleaner and there are fewer incidences of group drinking.

Some of the comments following the Adult Alcohol Awareness workshop:

“Factual information and excellent delivery”

“Useful information – quite shocking in some cases”

“Very informative – especially unit consumption!”

“Will recommend the session to other parents”

“will there be a repeat of the evening?”
Suggested text for Information Leaflet

What sort of person buys alcohol for a child.............?

...what sort of person are you?

The Community Alcohol Partnership is working to tackle underage alcohol consumption, associated crime and disorder and the negative impacts on health and society. Sadly, there is a real lack of awareness that supplying alcohol to people who are underage is a criminal offence, and can wreck young lives.

Key facts:

- underage drinking is a much more serious problem today than it has been in the past. Children are drinking at a younger age – and they are drinking more
- among 11-15 year olds who do drink, the average weekly consumption has doubled from 5.3 units in 1990 to 10.5 units in 2005
- 4781 under 18s are in alcohol treatment programmes, 953 of those being 12-14 year olds
- some of those in treatment programmes are as young as 10 years old
- you may think you are buying a bottle of Vodka for a 17-year old lad, but can you be sure he won’t give it to his 12-year old sibling or 15-year old girlfriend?
- 5281 under 18s a year are being admitted to hospital as a result of being too drunk or due to alcohol related accidents
- underage drinking increases the chance of longer term problems with alcohol misuse
- a young person who binge drinks at 16 is 60% more likely to be alcohol dependent at 30 than those that don’t
- alcohol increases the likelihood of involvement in risky sexual behaviour. One in seven young people has unprotected sex when drunk
- under 18s are more likely to become involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour after drinking
- 28% of 14-15 year olds reported damaging or destroying things after drinking
- 10% of 15-16 year olds report having been in trouble with the police as a result of drinking
- as well as the harm to young people and society, selling alcohol to children is a serious criminal offence. It could land you with a fine of up to £5,000
Annex D

Template Agreement for the project

The project activities are intended to complement the existing work of retailers and enforcement agencies, without increasing resource in the long term.

The aim is to work together to further reduce the incidence of alcohol sales to minors.

Key achievements would be to improve the working relations between all the different stakeholders and encourage more effective partnership working. This should also help to develop the perception that checkout staff are part of the solution rather than part of the problem. [Note: a commitment to move towards an intelligent led and carefully targeted approach to test purchasing will go a long way towards establishing trust and openness between retailers and statutory authorities.]

Although these activities are designed specifically to deal with underage sales of alcohol, we believe they could potentially help reduce all sorts of related crime and disorder issues, allowing all the stakeholders to better serve their communities.

**The activities should revolve around two key themes:**

**Information sharing**

- If stores are aware of potential or existing alcohol related problems this information will be shared immediately with Police and Trading Standards, as appropriate. Joint working will then follow to attempt to tackle the identified issues

- If police / trading standards have concerns relating to stores they will be shared immediately with the retailers involved and joint working will follow to tackle the issues

- If, having worked with retailers, enforcement agencies still feel that test purchase operations are necessary, all results will be shared with the retailer/s involved. This should be done as quickly as possible after the event. News of a successfully refused sale will be just as helpful to retailers. They can use this to enhance their current training and general age related sales awareness

**Dealing with young people**

- Enforcement agencies should focus on raising the profile of the legal implications of under age drinkers who try to buy alcohol illegally

- Consider a trial whereby under 18s who are found with alcohol are taken home and their parents informed. Consider also the use of Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to young people

- Give further consideration to the issue of proxy purchasing

- Aim for greater focus from all stakeholders on working in schools, with parents and with local health care providers
Advance warning for stores of Proxy Purchase enforcement operations

Dear Store Manager

I am writing to remind you of the ongoing efforts of the Community Alcohol Partnership to reduce public underage drinking in xxxx and to appeal for your continued cooperation as partners in this initiative.

I am asking you to notify either me or xxxx of any attempts to ‘proxy purchase’ alcohol (i.e. adults attempting to buy alcohol on behalf of under 18s) and any attempts by under 18s to purchase alcohol. I thank you for your cooperation and urge you to continue to assist and support this project.

We are planning a joint enforcement operation on [insert day and date], so I would like to remind you of the contact numbers you can use to report alleged offences to us immediately after they happen.

[Insert name and mobile contact numbers] These numbers are for use throughout the evening from approximately xxxx p.m.

You may also contact me at any other time on the number at the top of the page or the mobile number regarding any concerns you have associated with attempted proxy purchasing and/or attempts by under 18s to purchase alcohol.

If you have any particular concerns at your premises I would be willing to discuss the possibility of a member of Trading Standards staff being situated there throughout the evening to help identify offenders and keep them under observation until Police Officers arrive. Obviously, our ability to do so will depend on Trading Standards staff resources and retailers’ take-up of this initiative, but we will endeavour to help wherever possible. If we are unable to accommodate your request on a particular occasion please rest assured that I will make your request a priority for future dates.

I hope that by trying new, innovative methods of partnership working to reduce young people’s access to alcohol we can make a joint contribution to reducing underage drinking and create a safer, more pleasant place to live and work.

Yours etc..

Proxy Purchasing

Information to parents

You may already be aware of a community alcohol initiative which is being undertaken locally.

This is an innovative project looking at new ways to tackle underage drinking and public drinking in the town, as well as other related issues such as health problems, antisocial behaviour, vandalism and other forms of crime and disorder.

This project brings together a number of partners including Trading Standards, the Police, Schools, the Retail Trade and the Community. As such we consider you, as a parent, a key partner in this much-needed programme.
Trading Standards have traditionally worked diligently to enforce the law relating to the sale of alcohol to under 18s. However, despite considerable success in reducing the number of sales to people under 18 [insert local figures], there is evidence that young people are still gaining access to alcohol.

One particular concern is that alcohol is being purchased by adults on behalf of young people – commonly known as ‘proxy purchasing’. We are aware that many parents and guardians share our concerns, but we also know that others may not be aware of the far-reaching consequences of this.

For example:

- Alcohol misuse costs the Health Service up to £1.7bn each year
- By the age of 13, the proportion of those who drink exceeds the proportion of those who do not drink
- More than a third of 15 year olds report having been drunk at age 13 or earlier

You may not be aware that the Licensing Act 2003 and the Licensing (Young Persons) Act 2000 make ‘proxy purchasing’ an offence. Offenders can be liable to a fine of up to £5000.

Local retailers have given us their full support in the crackdown on proxy purchasing and if they have any suspicion that alcohol being purchased by an adult is to be passed on to someone who is under 18 they will alert us as soon as practically possible.

I’m sure you will agree that the statistics and facts above are worrying and we hope to have your full co-operation and support for this project.

We appeal to you not to involve yourself in the supply of alcohol to under 18s for public drinking and we strongly urge you to report, in strictest confidence, any suspicions or concerns you may have regarding proxy purchasing, under 18s buying or attempting to buy alcohol, or underage drinking in the town. You may do this by contacting xxxx on the following telephone number or e-mail address:

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I hope that by trying new, innovative methods of partnership working to reduce young people’s access to alcohol we can make a contribution to reducing public underage drinking and therefore make xxxx a safer, more pleasant place to live and work.

Yours faithfully,
Community Alcohol Partnership
Cracking down on Public
Under Age Drinking

The RASG Guide
to Tackling Nuisance
and Antisocial Behaviour

RASG is supported by the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA).

Any further advice or information may be obtained
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