



**Alcohol Focus**  
SCOTLAND

13May 2011

Charles Reppke  
Argyll and Bute Council  
Head of Governanace and Law  
Kilmory  
Lochgilphead  
Argyll  
PA31 8RT

Dear Mr Reppke

I am writing to inform you of some of the work being carried out by Alcohol Focus Scotland at a national level to further progress the links between licensing and public health.

We are aware that since the implementation of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, many Licensing Boards have indicated that they wish more guidance on what is meant by the objective, "protecting and improving public health" and how this can be applied in a practical manner. Equally we are that many health professionals are becoming involved in liquor licensing for the first time and are still working to understand both the potential and the limitations of licensing in terms of public health. One area that has taken a bold approach to these issues is West Dunbartonshire, however there are also some excellent examples of good practice from other Boards. It is our intention to include these on the licensing section of our website <http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/licensing>.

- We are aware that there is some debate over the level of statistical evidence and 'causal link' required to influence statements of licensing policy, and we can see this reflected in the various approaches to overprovision statements. We are working with a small group to produce a good practice guide on making over provision assessments which we will then make available to all Boards and Forums (hopefully before June).
- Again with the support of a small working group, we have made recommendations to the Scottish Government on changes that we think should be made to the Licensing Guidance to better support the public health objective and which also touches on these issues of data collection, causal link, etc.
- Alcohol Focus Scotland and SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems) have commissioned a QC to give a legal opinion on these issues and to what extent licensing and public health can work together.
- We are convening a 'high-level expert group' at the Royal College of Physicians in June to agree a robust scientific, academic and legal evidence base for assessment of overprovision and the public health objective.

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reducing harm caused by alcohol

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It is our intention to work with Licensing Boards to produce accessible resources. I look forward to sharing the results of these with Licensing Boards, Local Licensing Forums and Alcohol and Drug Partnerships throughout Scotland to further inform their future work. In the meantime we are aware that there is work being done in different localities in Scotland, touching on some of these issues and we are keen to have open channels of communication to share good practice and offer support. We would appreciate if you have experiences or examples that you think would be of use to others, if you could email them to [licensing@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:licensing@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk).

It is also our intention to discuss these issues in more detail at The National Licensing Conference, hosted by Alcohol Focus Scotland. It will be held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of September at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow. Although it has not yet been announced, we have received confirmation from Sir Crispin Agnew that he will speak, and we will of course be inviting the Justice Minister after the election. The Conference theme will be 'From Principles to Practice'. A booking form can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/national-licensing-conference>.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Evelyn Gillan**  
Chief Executive