

Better Health, Fairer Health**Regional advisory group for Alcohol**

**Minutes of the meeting held Friday 16 January 2009
Committee 1, Town Hall, Darlington**

Attendance:	Tricia Cresswell Colin Shevills Simon Mills Kate Lambert Julie Daneshyer Jill Smith Dave Hogg Virginia Minogue Rob Strachan Dave Bowditch David Kitching Andrew Russell Eileen Kaner Eilish Gilvary Nick Heather Chris Record Eugene Milne	Chair, County Durham Primary Care Trust North East Alcohol Office Public Health North East City Hospitals Sunderland NTA NEPHO North East Alcohol Office Department of Health Offender Health Government Office North East Government Office North East Stockton Borough Council Durham University Newcastle University NTW Northumbria University Newcastle Hospitals FT PHINE
In Attendance:	Lesley Thompson	North East Alcohol Office
Apologies Received:	Stephen Singleton Lesley Thirlwell Sue Johnson	Department of Health North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust NOMS

1. Introduction and apologies

The Chairperson, Dr Tricia Cresswell, introduced herself and explained her role. She welcomed members to the first meeting of the group and asked them to introduce themselves and describe their interest in the alcohol agenda.

Apologies were received from Lesley Thirlwell, North East Ambulance Service.

2. Why are we here?

Tricia gave an explanation of the purpose of the Group.

3. Overview presented by Eugene Milne

Eugene Milne presented an overview of the *Better Health, Fairer Health* regional strategy with specific reference to the *Alcohol* theme. Eugene opened the session up to questions – none were raised by the Group.

Action: Copy of presentation to be circulated with minutes.

4. Review and prioritise commitments

A discussion ensued around the commitments within the *Better Health, Fairer Health* document, specifically around alcohol. The following was noted:

- The North East Alcohol Office has been created. Concern was raised around the working title for the office “The Regional Office for the Safe Consumption of Alcohol” and reassurance was given that this title would not be used
- The Alcohol RAG will act as the advisory group for the Office and it was noted that a Strategic Alcohol Board is currently being created
- The RAG will advise and support the development of comprehensive, integrated alcohol treatment and support services. Concerns were raised that service provision is entirely dependent upon commissioners and providers. The role of the RAG was clarified as being advisory.

The following suggestions were made:

- Lobbying to increase taxation on alcohol
- Lobbying for inclusion in the Licensing Act of a social responsibility fee – fees would be made available to the NHS for alcohol-related treatment
- A working group will be created to agree a strategy for lobbying Government
- The role of the RAG and the Office should be considered in particular how they can advise/support on the Alcohol agenda
- Create identified links into other groups already undertaking alcohol work
- Create a working group to review criteria for good practice and develop systems to ensure treatment pathways are in place to deliver the level of service required.

5. Update on regional office

Colin Shevills gave an overview of the North East Alcohol Office, explaining that its role will evolve over time but that initially its priorities will be very process driven around developing an office brand which will be a very powerful social marketing tool. Colin proceeded to unveil the brand and requested feedback which was positive. The following points were made:

- Celebrity endorsement for campaigns will be reviewed on a case by case basis
- Partners will be encouraged to sign up to the brand though the Office will only be endorsing activity which is consistent with the Office and regional strategy and good practice.

Colin continued that the Office will be formally launched on 11 February 2009 and all RAG members will receive an invitation to attend. Following this, the Office will launch the Big Drink Debate which will take the form of a media and public opinion research campaign.

In the short-term the Office will develop an action plan around lobbying and treatment etc with the RAG playing a key role, ensuring good practice is shared and decisions

are made around standards of service provision. The Office is currently in the process of creating a website.

6. Communications & Social Marketing Strategy

Simon Mills explained that communications and social marketing were an integral part of *Better Health, Fairer Health* - and would be integral to delivering it.

Communications and social marketing support will be provided via a dual approach from the SHA and the Office. The way it will work is described in the paper identifying communications and social marketing requirements for RAGs. It was noted that the Central Office of Information has launched a social marketing campaign aimed at helping regular hazardous and harmful drinkers to cut down. It was agreed that national social marketing campaigns, as well as local initiatives, should be implemented in our region.

7. PCT Commissioning Plans

Significant investment is being made into alcohol services.

Action: Jill Smith to bring figures back to the next meeting based on recent NEPHO paper.

8. Research Update

A very quick overview of current research projects was discussed.

Action: Lesley to issue a proforma with the minutes for the Group to record these

9. Training issues

Tricia asked for information around specific training issues. The following suggestions were received:

- Workforce and skills development
- Review of workforce strategies

Rob highlighted that there are approximately 120 delegates attending a Home Office event around Licensing Legislation.

10. Action planning, task groups

The following actions were agreed:

- "Lobbying" working group to be established (**Colin Shevills**)
- Treatment pathways working group to be established (**Eileen Kaner**) once additional posts in place in alcohol office to support the group
- Mapping of LAA commitments, local alcohol strategies (**Rob Strachan**)
- Research mapping proforma to be circulated and completed by all members (**Lesley Thompson and all members**)
- Social marketing working group to be considered (**Colin Shevills**)

11. Terms of Reference

Draft Terms of Reference were circulated with the original meeting papers and were agreed with the following amendments:

- Item 3: replace “provide” with “support and facilitate” a strategic and co-ordinated approach
- Item 5: add ... “and in particular the North East Alcohol Office within the North East”

Action: Lesley to update the Terms of Reference and re-circulate

12. Membership Review

Appropriate membership of the group is essential. Other groups have specific actions around stroke, cancer, etc. Discussion is needed to identify key relationships with other groups. The following suggestions were made:

- Commissioning Manager
- Economist

It was agreed that at this time membership of the group would initially remain unchanged though it would be reviewed at appropriate intervals.

A discussion ensued around the role of the Strategic Alcohol Board and the Alcohol RAG. The Alcohol RAG Chair will sit on the SAB and act as a conduit between the Board and the RAG with the work being driven by the RAG and the Office.

13. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Tricia Cresswell requested nominations for Vice-Chair be forwarded to her.

Action: Group to consider nominations for Vice-Chair at next meeting.

14. AOB

The following comments were made:

- A recommendation was made to access www.natms.net for information around treatment figures
- A Home Office National Policy update at every meeting would be useful
- The Alcohol RAG membership list should be emailed to the Group, together with any useful information

Action: Rob Strachan to present the Home Office National Policy update

15. Future meetings

Wednesday 4 March: 10am-12noon, Gallowgate 1, Government North East Building, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle, NE1 4WH

Friday 1 May: 10am-12noon, Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington. DL1 5QT