



Fair Play Manifesto 2010

In our Manifesto Fair Play for Children committed itself to campaigning for important improvements for children's lives. One of areas is:

Protecting Children - Fair Play will campaign for improved Child Protection

including

The development of a national scheme to make it more difficult for children under legal age to obtain alcohol and to sanction adults who enable them to obtain alcohol – the introduction of a national swipe-card for adults when purchasing alcohol.

This publication examines Fair Play's concern and proposal. We do not attempt here to provide background and facts and figures re children and alcohol, suffice it to say that the evidence is out there that there is a risk to children posed by the availability of alcohol, as a very distinct and challenging aspect of what is a major problem in society.

The key issue must be how children access alcohol, and at all stages and in all situations it can be argued that behind every child who is consuming alcohol there is an adult who, in some sense, is the Provider.

The problem is that, at the point of possession and consumption by the child, it can be extremely difficult to identify and action the Provider.

The points of exchange between Provider and child:

- * unlawful sale
- * acting as proxy for supply
- * allowing home consumption, or, not securing home supply.

Our analysis is based on breaking the Provider-child supply chain, and we believe our approach may also have much wider benefits in tackling alcohol misuse.

Our starting point is that our customs and laws permit the buying and use of alcohol by adults, but not by minors. The basic assumption must be that we accept, as a point of departure, that purchase and consumption, and regulation of the latter are actions which should be available to any responsible adult. There are laws which sanction the effects of inappropriate

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use and supply.

If we may take an analogy, we assume that any responsible adult can take on the serious onus of owning and driving a car, and this is regulated by strict laws which all accept, to ensure to the best extent, the safety of all. However, in the case of a car, we require some form of licensing and it is not legally possible to drive without that. These days, this is symbolised by a requirement to possess a licence to drive, a photocard.

And that is the basis for our proposal which starts from the premise that the purchase, possession and consumption of alcohol is for responsible adults only and that at the age of 18 years, anyone can seek recognition of their right to do so. The Proof of Age Card system is well-known for enabling Providers and young people to be sure they will be recognised as acting lawfully.

Fair Play proposes that a very full study be undertaken of the idea of a 'right to possess alcohol' system, represented by possession of a swipe card. This card could be applied for by any person of 18 years and above, and it would be necessary for that person to produce that card when buying alcohol and for the vendor to require its production. The card would be obtained by a simple application process, maybe a charge of ?£10-£20 made to help fund the scheme.

The card would be of the swipe variety and would record details of every item purchased, date, place, time. This card would thus record full details of someone's alcohol purchase record, from information supplied on the can etc or the bar till. Each can or bottle would have a strip which would contain details of where it was purchased, date etc.

Any child found in possession of bottles or cans would thus carry the evidence of the i/d of the Provider and where that person purchased it. Such a system would enable it to be ascertained who was the Provider - the issue then would be intent. This could cover the casual 'will you go in and buy me some lager mister' to the nicked-it-from-dad's-drinks-cabinet scenario etc.

In the former case, Fair Play suggests that the Provider could then face not only the prospect of a heavy fine but endorsement/suspension of use of swipe card, thus preventing that person from purchasing alcohol or being supplied with it. This could include a points system - so many and out - or time-limited or indefinite bans (the latter for repeat offences). The careless parent could face such action if their child was found outside the home in possession but the idea does not intrude into the home and thus parents could decide when and if their children could have alcohol in the home setting.

The idea also has attraction re other forms of misuse of alcohol. For example, adults who behave in breach of the law who get intoxicated - one additional sanction on top of current measures could be 'marking their swipe card' so that the offender could not go into anywhere and buy alcohol or have anyone else buy it for him/her.

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On motoring under the influence the use of this type of sanction, from months to lifetime ban, would be an additional and effective sanction on top of fines and driving licence action. No car, no booze. We feel this could, in time, 'get under the skin' in terms of being 'second nature' and it would encourage more responsible use of alcohol.

As to cost, we have proposed already a modest charge at the outset but Fair Play also believes that the very rich alcohol industry could bear the brunt of funding the cost of this scheme.

Whatever people's views on this proposal, we strongly believe at Fair Play that children should not be involved in drinking alcohol as part of their expectation of leisure. That existing laws and measures are ineffective is a fact, and whatever the solutions, much more needs to be done to prevent children's access to alcohol.

**Fair Play for Children
32 Longford Road
Bognor Regis PO21 1AG
Tel: 0845-478 6365**

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Working for the Child's Right to Play