

Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs



Taking a Stand

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Being a QAAD Trustee



We are currently seeking to appoint some new trustees and hope that our series of articles written by current trustees will encourage Friends to explore the opportunity. Here, Jon Lyon (QAAD Clerk, Long Sutton Local Meeting) remembers his introduction to QAAD and how he feels trusteeship has benefitted him both personally and professionally.

I became involved with QAAD following a QAADNET event that occurred in my local area, when our previous Director Helena Chambers came to speak at Street Local Meeting. As a member of Long Sutton LM, and working in a community drug and alcohol project, I offered to help out at another event in Bristol, which went well. I was invited to the next Trustee meeting, and was offered the chance of being a Trustee at that point. That was about 18 years ago – which seems almost unbelievable looking back.

Being a Trustee, and attending regular meetings, enhanced my life. I felt that I was able to offer something to Friends, and also enjoyed travelling around the country and meeting people (Trustees can claim expenses!).

I eventually took over from Sandra Hobbs as Clerk, and have since helped run QAADNET meetings and our biennial conferences. It has been a privilege, and the experience has improved my self-esteem and even proved invaluable in helping me to progress in my career as an NHS Psychological Therapist.

The knowledge I have gained and shared with the other Trustees and Directors, and all the other people I have met throughout the years, has helped inform the work I do with my clients. I think I have a greater understanding of the family members of substance users and gamblers than I would have done otherwise. I learn from you – QAADRANT readers and Friends who attend our events. I am looking forward to meeting people face to face again, now that we seem to be moving on from the pandemic.

I would recommend anyone with an interest in Friends and QAAD's areas of concern to give trusteeship a go. We need new blood - I am one of the youngest Trustees and I've just turned 64! It could turn out to be an enjoyable commitment. I will admit that QAAD has become my local Meeting in all but name.

QAAD EVENTS

QAADNET Meetings

We are finalising arrangements for our next two meetings, the first to be held in person, the second on-line. As both will be held before the next issue, details will be posted on our website. Alternatively, please contact our director who can email or post these to you. You can also be added to our e-mailing list for future events.

QAAD Conference 2024

We are very pleased to confirm that we will host a national conference in summer next year. We will provide more details in the next issue and on our website.



Taking a Stand: Challenging the cinema screening of gambling adverts

We were very pleased to receive this article from Karen Dickson (Chester LM) who, whilst volunteering at Chester's Storyhouse, raised her concerns about gambling advertisements in its cinema. The positive results show that it is possible to challenge a major advertising company, and that some venues are willing to take positive steps, despite the financial implications.



This is a good news story, but first a little background information for context. An estimated 1.44 million adults are addicted to gambling in Great Britain¹; there are up to 496 gambling-related suicides in England each year²; and widespread mobile phone ownership means that online gambling is readily accessible, anywhere, anytime. Advertising is clearly a powerful driver for this industry, with £1.5 billion spent on advertising each year. However, whilst the recent White Paper includes some positive recommendations, there is a disappointing lack of measures to curb gambling ads.

Now, let's move onto something positive. Chester's Storyhouse opened in 2017. It is fair to say that this cultural hub has transformed the city. A library winds its way through the building and the theatre and cinema deliver a fantastic range of experiences. Food and drink are available all day and the whole space provides entertainment, somewhere for groups to meet, and a place to 'just be'. It truly serves the city and beyond, and does a great job supporting its marginalised members. I am

proud to support the charity as a volunteer.

Increasingly, whilst working cinema shifts, I noticed advertisements being shown that encourage people to gamble on their mobile phones. They portray online gambling as an exciting, sociable activity but sadly, in my experience, it is none of these. People are depicted gambling as they relax in their comfortable, bright homes, with friends, and even whilst having a bubble bath (online gambling really can take place anywhere!)

I am not an experienced campaigner, but these advertisements triggered a response. I knew they were painting a false picture and was sure that the dangers that they can bring do not accord with Storyhouse's ethos. I emailed the Lead Volunteer with my concerns and received a prompt reply explaining that the cinema informs Pearl & Dean which films will be screened each week. They are then sent ad packs, matched to each film: gambling adverts can only be screened when the film has a 15+ certificate.

I wanted to know if it would be possible for Storyhouse to opt out of receiving these adverts, and looked at the Pearl & Dean website. This was very interesting! I suspect William Hill (and similar companies) target cinemas knowing that they have a captive audience that can't fast forward, or leave the room to make a cuppa, during the ads. Pearl & Dean's publicity talks about being able to target '*specific demographics or the population as a whole. The cinema is the best environment in which to showcase any brand with an audience that is in a relaxed and receptive state of mind. There are no distractions, and*



advertising is readily accepted as part of the whole cinema experience. This makes cinema advertising one of the most impactful media channels available.⁵

I felt that it could not be beyond Pearl & Dean's ability to create alternative packages - indeed they already do this to match the age certification of the film – so I contacted them to ask if there was any flexibility about pack content. I also shared my concerns with f/Friends, a prospective local councillor, and my regular Woodbrooke online Meeting for Worship group who were very supportive and had lots of suggestions, including contacting the local MP and QAAD. I decided not to contact our MP at this point because I still hoped to persuade Storyhouse to act on the matter. After a few days, Pearl & Dean replied, saying that I had to speak to Storyhouse as they would only communicate with them.

In the meantime, the government's White Paper was published, alongside useful articles in the newspapers⁵ and from campaigning organisations such as Gambling with Lives⁶.

A few weeks later, Storyhouse held one of their regular information sessions for staff and volunteers. As the meeting started, I looked around the room and it occurred to me that there were probably several people there whose lives were being affected by gambling addiction within their family – they might not know it, or they might be ashamed to admit it. Finally, nervously, I raised the issue, explaining a little about the advertisements and asking if Storyhouse would be prepared to opt out of showing them. Quite soon, I was stopped! Oh dear! I feared the worst, but it was to be told that Storyhouse's management had already met and, despite the financial implications, had contacted Pearl & Dean. Within the next two weeks, advertisements for online gambling would no longer be shown in this cinema. This organisation had proved it

genuinely cares for the community and there were many immediate, very positive comments from others in the room.

Since then, I've been reflecting on how tobacco advertising and sponsorship was banned in 2005. As I was growing up, that would have felt impossible. Cigarette advertising promised a happy, healthy life – no mention of the health implications. In a similar vein, gambling adverts promote a seemingly safe, fun, sociable and glamorous experience with no mention of the high addiction rates, broken families, poverty and high suicide risks. Many people share a genuine desire to end gambling advertising. Indeed, at the time of writing, it is one of four subjects on the resolution shortlist for the Women's Institute 2023 Annual Meeting*. Storyhouse is leading the way, and we can only hope that, before too long, we see all gambling advertising banned, everywhere.

¹ YouGov Annual Great Britain Treatment & Support Survey 2021 on behalf of GambleAware

² Office for Health Improvement and Disparities – The Economic and Social Cost of Harms Associated with Gambling in England, 2023

³ <https://business.pearlanddean.com/>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/27/uk-to-tighten-rules-on-online-gambling-after-long-awaited-review>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/may/14/gambling-firm-allegedly-paid-blogs-to-link-new-mothers-to-its-online-games>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/apr/27/the-guardian-view-on-gambling-reform-fighting-the-british-disease>

⁵ <https://www.gamblingwithlives.org/>

* Online gambling harm was not chosen for this year's resolution. However, QAAD is pleased that it was shortlisted, and we hope this has raised awareness of the problem amongst WI members.

NEW WEBSITE!

We have launched our new website: www.qaad.org It features details of our work, events, news, and recent copies of QAADRANT. We hope you will find it an improvement and would welcome your feedback.



Minimum Unit Pricing: the latest from Scotland and Wales

In June, evaluation reports were published on the impact of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) in Scotland and Wales¹. Here, Andrew Misell (Director for Wales at Alcohol Change UK and a member of Cardiff LM) summarises the main findings and discusses the complexity of their interpretation.

Anyone who's ever lived with an alcohol problem – their own or a loved one's – will know that the reasons someone drinks are often deep, personal and complex. So, it might seem reductive to say that drinking habits can be shaped by simple financial considerations. But that is exactly what decades of research from around the world have shown: not that cost is the only factor in how much people drink, but that it is a big factor.

It's this realisation that led to the introduction of minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol in Scotland in 2018 and in Wales in 2020. In both countries, a unit of alcohol – two teaspoons of pure ethanol – cannot be sold for less than 50p, regardless of the type of drink in which it is found. This means that a bottle of wine (around 10 units) cannot be sold for less than £5, and a pint of beer or cider (around 2.5 units) for less than £1.25. You can see straight away that a MUP of 50p has no effect on the drinks sold in pubs and hasn't raised the price of most alcohol in shops either. What it *has* done is massively increase the price of the cheap, strong ciders often favoured by the heaviest drinkers. Big 3-litre bottles of 7.5% ABV² cider are no longer sold in Scotland or Wales, and there's been a noticeable shift towards 500ml cans of these drinks instead. MUP has also removed some of the cheapest spirits from the market.

In theory, such changes in the availability of alcohol will lead to reductions in both consumption and harm. But this brings us back to those deep, personal and complex reasons for drinking that I mentioned at the start. What happens when a simple intervention like MUP comes up against those? That's what the MUP evaluation programmes in Scotland and Wales have been trying to find out, and both territories published evaluation reports in June.

The Scottish report was the most robustly confident of the two – unsurprisingly, perhaps, given that Public Health Scotland have had two more years than Wales to gather data. The report's authors concluded that '*MUP has had a positive impact on health outcomes*', including a reduction in alcohol-attributable deaths and hospital admissions, particularly in the most deprived parts of Scotland. They also noted that some professionals believed that reduced affordability was driving more people to seek help for alcohol problems.

The report from Wales was more cautious, and also generated more media attention, primarily because of the following sentence: '*Overall, there was a sense from the service providers that the introduction of [MUP] has had a detrimental effect on the health of their service users.*' Taking one sentence out of context is rarely a good idea, and it's worth digging a bit deeper here. For example, the evaluation team found little evidence of people switching from alcohol to illicit drugs (one of the big concerns expressed prior to MUP's introduction in Wales). In addition, although there was some evidence of people going without food in order to buy alcohol, the researchers concluded that poor



nutrition and a lack of self-care were often *'related to alcohol consumption rather than to a lack of funds... [and] cannot be directly attributed to the pricing policy'*.

It's also worth weighing up the claims made by some opposition politicians in both Scotland and Wales in June that alcohol-related deaths have increased under MUP. Like many misleading statements, this one contains an element of truth. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that alcohol-specific deaths across the UK were 27% higher in 2020 than in 2019, and 7.4% higher in 2021 than in 2020. So, it is factually correct to say that alcohol-specific deaths have increased in Scotland and Wales since the introduction of MUP; but they also increased in England and Northern Ireland – where MUP is not in operation. The generally accepted conclusion is that these tragic additional deaths were due to heavier drinking during the Covid-19 pandemic and there is no evidence that MUP was a cause.

As time goes on, we will get a clearer picture of how MUP is working, but it is unlikely ever to be crystal clear. Much like Saint Paul, we may always be looking 'through a glass darkly'. That's because MUP is a very good example

of what public health researchers call a 'simple intervention in a complex system'. It has definite parameters; we can explain what it does and doesn't do to drinks prices; but it's happening in a complex mess of individual and collective desires, drinking habits and social norms, commercial profit and loss, and plenty more.

Looking at both evaluation reports, I am confident, overall, that MUP is making positive differences, that it should remain in place, and be extended to the rest of the UK. It should also, at some point, increase, given that the current 50p level will eventually be rendered meaningless by inflation.

But MUP is not enough on its own. The Welsh evaluators identified *'significant, often unmet alcohol treatment needs'* and that service-users told them that *'alcohol treatment and wider social supports are lacking'*. That is our next challenge: to make the most of the positive effects of MUP by building up the support that people need to recover from a life of harmful drinking.

1 MUP was introduced in the Republic of Ireland in 2021; Northern Ireland is currently consulting on the issue.

2 Alcohol by Volume



SUMMARY OF THE DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022

Our Director's work has continued to focus on education, prevention and support activities that address the problems of substance and gambling addiction. These activities work for the benefit of the Religious Society of Friends and the wider public.

1. FRIENDS AND MEETINGS

Supporting Friends is an important element of our work. Whilst not offering counselling, we

provide personal support and opportunities for Friends to engage with each other, including our national conference, QAADNET meetings, and gatherings at Meetings and Quaker events.

Over the past year, our Director has offered Friends support and information about specialist and local services. The majority of contacts were family members or friends ('close others'). We sometimes arrange confidential contact with willing and informed Friends, including members of 12-Step fellowships and those who have found other



helpful approaches. We welcome the growing recognition of the impact on close others of coping with another's addiction or problematic use, and remain very concerned that specialist support for them is limited and underfunded.

We had hoped that face to face events could resume in 2022. In reality, it was clear that many Friends were still exercising caution, and it was decided to continue online meetings until full confidence had returned. Our online seminar, *'Moving On – Supporting people in early recovery to rebuild their lives'* was attended by Friends from all over the country and we plan to combine online and in-person events in future.

2. YOUNG FRIENDS

Children, adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to substance and gambling-related harm. We are keen to develop our support for young Friends affected by their own and/or another's substance or gambling problems. We are particularly aware that many who were affected by these issues during lockdown may now be dealing with the longer-term impact.

Whilst the downward trend in young people's drinking has continued, cannabis and nitrous oxide use is widespread. Engagement in gaming and gambling remains an ongoing concern, particularly in relation to 'loot boxes' and football.

Our director attended meetings of the Quaker Youth Work Network throughout the year. She also met with a Youth Development Worker and the Young People's Integration Coordinator to discuss potential future work.

3. PUBLIC ISSUES

QAAD continues to research and raise awareness of measures that help to improve

public health relating to substance and gambling-related harm.

Drugs and Alcohol

Our Director monitors UK and international evidence on substance use and harm, with a particular focus on the vulnerability of children, young people and those with complex needs. Developing a robust understanding of the risks, and the lived experiences of those affected, enables QAAD to inform and support Friends, and engage in discussions about policy and regulation.

In July, the Home Office published 'Swift, Certain, Tough', a White Paper proposing changes to how the criminal justice system tackles adult drug possession, with the overall aim of reducing drug demand to a 30-year low within a decade. Internationally, further US states and countries relaxed laws on recreational cannabis use (and other drugs in some jurisdictions). There was increased interest in the potential use of hallucinogens to treat entrenched mental health conditions. London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, established the London Drugs Commission to examine evidence of the impact of cannabis on people's lives and communities which will report its findings in 2023.

Public Health Scotland reported that Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) for alcohol had resulted in a 3% reduction in retail sales, but there was no clear evidence of changed consumption amongst the heaviest drinkers. Its final evaluation will be published in 2023; evaluation in Wales is ongoing. QAAD supports the call for a UK-wide MUP, although the government has no current plans to do so.

In May, our Director spoke at 'Faith, Families and Recovery', hosted by ADFAM¹, describing the impact on families supporting relatives

experiencing addiction and harm. Such events develop our understanding of research and personal experiences, whilst developing contact with professionals and academics.

Gambling

For several years, QAAD has stressed the need for an evidence-based, public health approach to improve prevention, support and treatment. Publication of the government's review of the 2005 Gambling Act was expected this year but delayed several times. The Gambling

Commission issued £76m of fines (2022-3), the majority for failures related to social responsibility e.g. sending incentives to people who had self-excluded from gambling sites.

QAAD is a founding member of the Faith Action on Gambling Harm ecumenical group which meets to share knowledge and concerns, and to identify areas where joint campaigns might increase their impact.

The full version of this report is available on our website and by post on request.

[/ www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

Thank you for your support

We have felt cheered and supported by the generous donations we have continued to receive from individuals, Meetings and Trusts during this difficult time. Donations are significant in two ways - they make us feel that our work is valued, and they give QAAD a longer-term future. In order to continue our work, we need to continue to draw down from our reserves which, of course, are not unlimited. Please send your donation to: **Ron Barden, Treasurer, 33 Booth Lane North, Northampton, NN3 6JQ.** Alternatively, if you would prefer to donate using a BACS transfer, our banks details are:

Account Name: Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

A/C No: 31452673 Sort code: 400327.

If you can Gift Aid your donation, it will be enhanced by 25p for each £. Please complete the form below and return it with your donation.

I am a UK Taxpayer and want QAAD to treat all donations I have made for the past four years, and all future donations I make from the date of this declaration, as Gift Aid Donations until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that I must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax reclaimed on my donations in the appropriate tax year. I understand that if I pay less Income and/or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay back any difference.

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