

Helen Keefe
Committee of Advertising Practice (Broadcast)
Mid City Place
71 High Holborn
London WC1V 6QT

31 March 2005

Dear Ms Keefe

BCAP Consultation: Broadcast Advertising of Alcohol Section 2

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the guidance notes for broadcasters (Section 2) in respect of new rules governing alcohol advertising on television. This letter seeks only to respond to the part of the consultation dealing with these rules (by the given deadline of 11 April 2005).

We will conduct a broader consultation on the proposed new rules governing health and dietary claims in alcohol advertising (Section 3) and respond by the end of that consultation period (6 June 2005).

The BMA has commented on the issue of alcohol advertising in recent months, including the earlier consultation by Ofcom in August 2004 [copy of letter attached for ease of reference]. This letter will reiterate BMA policy on advertising of alcohol, particularly as it affects the young.

BMA policy as regards advertising of alcohol

It has been the BMA's policy since 2003 that **because of the damaging effect alcohol has on the health of our society and because of the rising levels of binge drinking among the young**, there should be a ban on advertising on alcohol.

The BMA is concerned that alcoholic drinks, particularly alcopops, are often aimed at the teenage market. While existing regulations should help protect young people from targeted advertising, the spirit of the existing Code is not always followed.

The rule changes all represent a sensible tightening of the existing code. As noted above, the BMA is calling for a total ban on alcohol advertising, particularly as it is difficult to target advertising at those in their twenties without having an influence on under-18s. In the absence of such a policy, any attempts to disassociate alcohol, social success, bravado and sex are welcome. Furthermore, the disassociation of alcohol and confidence is important in the context of young people's drinking.

The BMA agrees that regulating advertising with a wider appeal is necessary to achieve a meaningful reduction in the degree of engagement of viewers under 18.

Binge drinking in Britain is of increasing concern to the medical profession. Adolescents in the UK have one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption and binge drinking in Europe.¹ The BMA website now

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the consultation of August 2004, in your notes you might like to consider mentioning the adverse effects of binge drinking. These are significant and include an increase in alcohol-related incidents - for example, road crashes and violence - and alcohol-related conditions including liver disease and alcohol poisoning.ⁱ Binge drinking habits established early in life can influence adult drinking behaviour,ⁱⁱⁱ thus compounding the negative health effects.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Vivienne Nathanson
Director of Professional Activities

ⁱ Alcohol Concern (2002) *Alcohol and Teenage Pregnancy*. London: Alcohol Concern.

ⁱⁱ Meikle, J. (2001) *Binge-drinking: Britain's new epidemic Alarm at role of alcohol in deaths, violence, crime and accidents*, <http://society.guardian.co.uk/drugsandalcohol/story/0,8150,439962,00.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Blake H et al. Drinking habits of 16 year olds: secondary analysis of the 1970 British cohort study. Alcohol insight (Alcohol education research council) www.aerc.org.uk (accessed June 2003)