

Friends, Mencap, Parents' Association, the Community Health Council and others also played an important part in providing a better care and future for the mentally handicapped in Bristol and Bath.

## REFERENCES

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## Conference Report

### *Preventing Alcohol Misuse*

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This Conference, organised by the Department of Health and Social Security, was held at the King's Fund Centre on 20 February 1987. It was chaired by Professor Griffith Edwards and was attended by representatives of health, social work, education, the media, the alcohol industry, voluntary agencies and a number of other relevant interest groups. The keynote speech from the Rt Hon Norman Fowler set the scene for the day's discussions. He emphasised the importance of bringing about a change in public attitude towards alcohol. He made a number of positive and encouraging references to the College's Report and endorsed some of its recommendations. He acknowledged the influence of price and availability on levels of consumption and the part which Government can play in influencing these factors. He also recognised that a wide range of government departments were involved in various aspects of alcohol problems, mentioning particularly the Home Secretary's Standing Conference on Crime Prevention; working groups on young people and alcohol, and juvenile crime; and the Department of Transport's concern with drinking and driving. He also expressed concern about the images presented by the media.

In recognising the all-pervasive influence of injudicious drinking, he pointed out the importance of generating an effective community response and the need to make the most effective use of existing resources.

Professor Anthony Clare reviewed alternative prevention strategies, dispelling the myth of two drinking populations and underlining the fact that per capita consumption was a crucial factor governing the overall level of harm in the population. He also emphasised the particularly damaging consequences of intoxication for the 15–24

year old group. He asked "How can we make intoxication socially unacceptable?". He also pointed out that the funds devoted to health education are miniscule compared with those which the drink trade devotes to advertising. Advertisements promoting alcohol are very carefully conceived and based on an intimate knowledge of the consumer group to which they are addressed. Lack of funds prevents a similar level of detail, knowledge and skill being made available to the promotion of sensible drinking and information about the health risks involved.

Professor David Robinson from the University of Hull outlined the ways and means and tactics for prevention initiatives. He emphasised the kinds of projects which could be undertaken by interested groups at a local level.

There were six discussion groups concerned with alcohol and young people, alcohol in the workplace, alcohol and the media (excluding sports promotion and TV advertising), marketing, retailing and advertising of alcohol (including sports promotion and TV advertising), barriers to intervention, and a co-ordinated approach to local action. These groups then reported with brief statements of future preventive initiatives. Baroness Trumpington concluded the meeting with the promise that a report on the day's proceedings would be made available to participants.

#### Comment

The Government position reflected a refreshing willingness to acknowledge the range of alcohol-related problems and their responsibility for a commitment to prevention. I was encouraged by the extent to which the recommendations of the College's own report were echoed in the Minister's speech.