Public-Private Partnerships: 
the Case of Alcohol Moderation

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“(Andrew Lansley...) made filthy rich
By those who represent Walkers Crisps, Mars and Pizza Hut, proved you’re a health slut and your always talking s**t
A hundred and thirty four pound an hour every week
That’s quite a lot of quids
And you came to the conclusion that
the food industry should be a little less strict”

MCNxtGen, with Unison
Public Private Partnerships

- Collaboration of government with one or more private sector companies, plus not-for-profit organisations and independent experts
- Developing mutually agreed goals for social policy

“by reevaluating our relationship with industry… we can help spread good public health messages and actions even further… without the need for intrusive, restrictive and, in fact, costly regulation” (Andrew Lansley, 2011)

Examples of PPPs
Advantages of PPPs

- Public partner accesses to skills, expertise, infrastructure and resources lacking in the public sector (Widdus, 2001)
- Private partner obtains credibility, political/market intelligence and association with ethical practice (Thomas, 2008)
- Injecting entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector (Guardian, 2001)
- Buy in from all concerned

“…partners play an essential role in influencing and shaping people’s behaviour. Action by individuals and by the government must be aligned with that led by communities, third sector organisations and business”

("Ambitions for Health", 2008, p.45)

- In times of ‘skyrocketing’ health costs, chronic disease burden and dwindling resources – can we afford not to?
- “Policy innovation of the new millennium – or unavoidable necessity”? (Richter, 2004, p.45)
Upstream social marketing

“...we now call collectively for social marketing to embrace a broader perspective that encompasses not just individual behaviour, but also the social and physical determinants of that behaviour...this broadening still involves behaviour change, but among those who make policy and legislative decisions on behalf of groups, corporations, and governments...” (Hastings & Donovan, 2002, p.4)

Impact of alcohol

• UK alcohol deaths doubled in last 15 years
• Per capita alcohol consumption doubled in last 40 years
• 33,000 deaths in the UK each year
• Contributes to obesity

“Action needs political courage as we are dealing with not just an irresistible pleasure, but massive vested interests”
Alcohol Action Ireland chairperson
Responsibility Deal on Alcohol Network

Chaired by Jeremy Beadles (Wine and Spirit Trade Association)

- ASDA
- Alcohol Concern
- Alcohol Health Alliance
- Bacardi Brown-Forman Brands
- British Association for the Study of the Liver
- British Beer and Pub Association
- British Liver Trust
- British Medical Association
- British Retail Consortium
- Cancer Research UK
- Cardiff University
- The Co-operative

- Department of Health
- Diageo GB
- Faculty of Public Health
- Heineken UK
- Institute of Alcohol Studies
- Molson Coors
- Morrisons PLC
- Nat. Clin. Dir for Liver Disease
- National Heart Forum
- Portman Group
- Royal College of Physicians
- University of Southampton

Responsibility Deal on Alcohol (RDA)

• By Dec 2013, 80% of products labelled with unit content, NHS guidelines and warning re. drinking when pregnant
• Raise awareness of the unit content in on- and off-trade
• Explore messages around drinking guidelines and harms
• Action to reduce and prevent under-age sales of alcohol
• Maintain financial support/in-kind funding for Drinkaware
• New sponsorship code e.g. no outdoor ads within 100m of schools and adhering to the Drinkaware brand guidelines
• Provide support for local schemes to address issues around social and health harms e.g. Best Bar None and Pubwatch,
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Rejection of RDA

"The most effective means of reducing alcohol-related harm is through adjustments in affordability, availability and promotion...
The Responsibility Deal fails to address any of these policy areas and we are yet to see any real proof that Government is looking into developing a cross-departmental comprehensive alcohol strategy, based on evidence of what works."

Katherine Brown, Institute of Alcohol Studies
Rejection of RDA

- Minor amends with little evidence for impact e.g. labeling
  (Baggott, 2008; Barbor, 2004; Jamoulle, 2006)
  - Onus on the user rather than the product (Wolburg, 2005)
  - Avoiding strategies with proven impact e.g. pricing
- Labeling may even make drinking more desirable
  - Boomerang and reactance effects (Ringold, 2002; Stewart & Martin, 1994; Bushman, 1998; Rummel et al., 2000)
- Largely not SMART objectives, self regulated, no sanctions
- Largely symbolic: positive PR in appearing responsive to societal concerns (Jessop & Wade, 2008; Wolburg, 2005; Ringold, 2002)

Assumptions behind PPPs

- That business has a legitimate role to play in policy and is integral to government
- Or is this fraternising with the enemy? (Thomas, 2008)

“Businesses should not try to do the work of governments, just as governments should not try to do the work of businesses. The goals of business and the goals of government are different - or should be. That, by the way, is why ‘partnership’ between those two should always arouse intense suspicion”

The Economist, January 2005
Western democracy and policy making

- Liberal democracy
- Pluralism
- Commercial pluralism
- Government
- Private individuals
- Big business

Assumptions for productive partnerships

- Trust and mutual respect
- True partnership
- Clear and common goals
- Sensitivity to other’s requirements
- Protecting public interest
- Objectivity over evidence
- Commitment to the partnership

(Lucas, 2002; Marmot, 2004; Austin, 2000)
Trust

- Almost 1 in 12 UK alcohol advertisements breached advertising guidelines in 2006 (Marketing Week, 2007)
- 22 complaints upheld by UK Advertising Standards Authority for 2007/8/9
  - Linking alcohol to seduction/sexual activity or success
  - Linking alcohol to confidence/social success
  - Portraying irresponsible or dangerous consumption behaviour
  - Advertising appealed to young/under age drinkers
  - Misleading (e.g. sales promotion/calories in drinks etc)
- Growth of online activity open to young people and unregulated (Carroll & Donovan, 2002)

Clear and common goals

- Can the alcohol industry and health experts have the same goals?
- Does the alcohol industry use PPPs to ward off criticism and possible regulation? (Atkins et al. 2008)
- Using opportunity to set public agenda – effectively sidelining NGOs and independent experts (Richter, 2004)
- Gaining access to political or marketing intelligence and/or competitive edge over other companies (Richter, 2004)
- Possibly distracting or compensating for other, more dubious, practices – as CSR does
True partnership

- Suggests equal status for the organisations involved
- “Implicitly downgrades the role of governments and intergovernmental organisations and upgrades the (political) status of private actors, in particular of the transnational corporations involved in these cooperation models” (Martens, 2003: 26)
- Healthcare professionals and independent bodies are reluctant collaborators: only opportunity to be heard

Objectivity

- The Academy of Medical Sciences used the same evidence as the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit (PMSU)
- AMS concluded that “to control alcohol problems one needs to control alcohol”
  i.e. increasing price and limiting availability
- PMSU - such strategies would have “unwanted side effects and…not a viable option” (Marmot, 2004)
Do PPPs work?

“We enjoy health in the UK today because of clean safe water, sanitation, seat belts, immunisation…this is not voluntary agreement, this is no cosy arrangement with the industry – it is the state saying that they have a duty of care to their citizen...

Every representative of these companies is committed to the bottom line...to their shareholders, the conflict of interest is breathtaking, the processed food industry is the problem: it is not the solution”

Prof Simon Capewell, 2011)

Spectrums of partnership
Factors for effective partnership

- Agreement on specific goals and overt evaluation
- Oversight and regulation by independent parties
- Transparent arrangements and explicit about dilemmas
- Agreed ethical code
- Benchmarks for good practice
- Relevant complementary expertise, equitable contribution
- Long term benefits for all stakeholders
- Putting public interest at the heart of policy
  (Baggott, 2004; Bruno & Karliner, 2001; Thomas, 2008; Widdus, 2001)

Conclusion

“partnerships should be regarded as social experiments: they show promise but are not a panacea”
(Widdus, 2001: 713)

“partnership development is much copied but poorly researched”
(Lefebvre, 2006: 41)

Thank you!
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