

29 Apr 16

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CURBING EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN THE FIELD ARMY

Reference:

A. [AGAI 64 – Substance Misuse](#).

SITUATION

1. There is a good and there is an ugly side to drinking for soldiers of all ranks. While we should exploit the collective social benefits of responsible drinking (responsible drinking means you never have to feel sorry for what has happened while you were drinking), we must all accept that drinking too much – excessive alcohol consumption (most people call it drunkenness) – is destructive and undermines operational effectiveness. There is a woeful trail of vomit, blood and related ill-discipline that has and is translating into a real loss of capability in the Field Army. All this at a time when we need to maximise our deployability and it is units that pick up the G1 pieces and feel the G3 pain.

2. The catalyst to do more is self-evident. In the last year 356 soldiers lost their driving licences (1 licence lost every day) to alcohol misuse and over the last 5 years alcohol has played a critical factor in Administrative Action (40% of all cases in 2015), and Service Law cases (27% in 2015). The frequency of alcohol related ill-discipline is on the rise and PS2 assess that alcohol contributed to 24 soldiers being discharged early. The NHS reinforces that excessive alcohol is bad for our health; the less you drink, the lower the health risks. So the case to do more is clear.

3. We can stick our heads in the sand (Liddel Hart noted that the British were often attracted to ostrichism as a way of avoiding difficult decisions) or we can try and do better. This is a case of Hobson's choice, a term often used to describe a difficult decision, but its real meaning is to have no choice at all. We need to do better. In terms of approach I accept that the most effective tool we have in addressing the excessive consumption of alcohol is the unit chain of command. I recognise that Rome was not built in a day and that this is about leading cultural change; a draconian policy of enforced restraint would be counter-productive. My aim is to amplify the role of leadership, and empower Commanding Officers to design imaginative and innovative approaches that reduce excessive alcohol consumption and increase operational effectiveness.

DIRECTION

4. **Intent.** This direction is a positive step to clarify measures to improve operational effectiveness and reduce serious alcohol related incidents by curbing excessive alcohol consumption within the Field Army. It is about leading cultural change, not about eliminating social activity. Improvement will be achieved through leadership by example, education, appropriate duty of care, management oversight, holding to account (H2A) and by optimising a culture of professionalism.

5. **Approach.** Commanders are to lead their units in a healthier and more professional approach to the responsible consumption of alcohol. This should be achieved through the application of the Army Leadership Code, by extolling the professional soldier ethos, through pride in appearance and bearing, by holding commanders to account and by setting the right example. There must be a concerted drive to overcome the 'bystander culture' and supervise our people more effectively. This Directive is deliberately prescriptive but it recognises that the chain of command has a vital part to play and as such it is deemed appropriate for Formation and Unit commanders to exercise their own judgement in respect of: drivers signing out; variations in opening hours for specified events; late starts and use of alternative venues for one off events – open days, sports events, sub-unit BBQs et al.

6. **Alcohol Action Plan.** Formations are to satisfy themselves that every HQ, Unit and MOD establishment under command has an extant and fit for purpose Alcohol Action Plan, signed by the current Commanding Officer and briefed to all personnel on site. A summary must be displayed in all facilities serving alcohol, all unit lines and SLA. As a minimum the Action Plan must cover:

- a. Mandatory education and briefings.
- b. Numbers, roles, responsibilities and locations of Duty Personnel.
- c. Facilities authorised to sell alcohol and associated opening hours.
- d. Limitations on consumption of alcohol.
- e. Procedures for extra-ordinary events.
- f. Procedures for drivers signing out of camp.
- g. 'Actions on' incidents where alcohol excess is believed to be a factor.
- h. Availability and contact details of support networks.

7. **Oversight.** Formations are to ensure appropriate oversight at unit and establishment level to include:

a. **Education.**

(1) Annual completion of MATT 6, delivered by the CO personally; where this is not possible it must be delivered by OC or Adjutant explicitly on the CO's behalf and recorded appropriately.

(2) Quarterly and pre event briefings by the CoC covering the effects of alcohol abuse.

(3) OC CDT will deliver, on request, bespoke training to cover alcohol abuse. This support should be targeted at units where data indicates a prevalent issue.

b. **Duty of Care.**

(1) **Duty personnel.** Formations are to ensure that units conduct an estimate to derive the number of duty staff required to implement the alcohol directive. Duty staff are to be appropriately briefed on their responsibilities in relation to the sale and consumption of alcohol within MOD establishments, including:

- (a) Bar closure times, including any authorised extensions.

- (b) Consumption of alcohol in SLA.
- (c) Sign out procedures for drivers commensurate with bar opening times.
- (d) 'Actions on' and reporting of alcohol related incidents.

(2) **Alcohol advisors.** Once Army HQ implements the Alcohol Advisor programme, units must ensure that relevant staff are appropriately trained.

(3) **Drivers signing out.** In line with bar opening it is encouraged that all drivers leaving an MOD establishment from the commencement of bar opening, until 0600 the following day, are to sign out in the presence of the Guard Commander .

(4) **Late Starts.** Late starts are permissible for authorised functions with permission from the Commanding Officer but must be part of a formal, recorded, risk assessment.

(5) **Fitness for work.** There must be a change of attitude and culture. Commanders are to adopt an appropriately robust attitude towards fitness for work. Maximum use should be made of morning muster parades. As a benchmark soldiers and officers who show signs of excessive alcohol consumption and can reasonably be considered unfit to drive the 'morning after' should also be considered unfit for work. Admin or disciplinary action must follow as appropriate.

8. **Authorised Bars.** The following are the only facilities that may serve alcohol, at the discretion of the Commanding Officer, on the condition that all appropriate safeguards are in place, including regular monitoring by duty personnel, and that CRL contracts are not impinged:

- a. Officers' Mess, Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess and Corporals' Club (where present).
- b. Junior Ranks Club.
- c. Sub unit bar for Reserve sub units and detachments where separated from unit facilities.
- d. Sports bar where present (e.g. Qaboos Pavilion at RMAS or Garrett's at the Army Sports Stadium).
- e. A community centre or equivalent venue may be authorised for use for bespoke all ranks events (eg Coy BBQ) that do not warrant the use of a Mess or the JRC.
- f. In exceptional circumstances , if a unit bar is required due to lack of other facilities listed above, is legal in every way (encroachments, fire safety, hygiene etc), is supported by the 1* fmn, and is subject to appropriate oversight, then it may be authorised in writing by the 1* Comd.

9. **Limitations.** Alcohol may be consumed privately, in moderation, in unit SLA, however this must not be permitted to expand into uncontrolled gatherings likely to disturb others on camp or get out of hand.

10. **Timings for the sale of alcohol.** Subject to contract limitations the following timings for the sale of alcohol in authorised bars are to be adhered to in all facilities across the Field Army:

- a. Weekdays – 1800 – 2300hrs.

b. Weekends – 1400 – 2300hrs.

c. Drinking up time:

(1) Last orders 2250hrs.

(2) Bar closed 2300hrs.

(3) Bar vacated 2330hrs.

d. Commanding Officers may authorise earlier bar opening times for specific events and extensions to 2359hrs may be granted. Adjusted times must be published on unit part one orders in advance. This can be further extended for seasonal balls and similar official functions on request from the Commanding Officer to the Formation Commander. In all cases a formal risk assessment must be completed and recorded.

e. Messes may serve alcohol at lunch time at the discretion of the Commanding Officer.

11. **H2A.** Commanders will be held to account and are to make best use of AGAI 67 ensuring appropriately annotated records are kept. Guidelines have been developed that will assist in clarifying the liability of commanders for the actions of their subordinates. A flow chart to guide commanders is at Annex A. In the event that a Commanding Officer has failed to ensure appropriate measures are in force to arrest a trend of alcohol related incidents, they should be formally warned to address the situation by the respective 1* Comd. Subsequent failure to address the issue will result in action being taken. 1* Comd oversight must also be assessed for efficacy by the respective 2* HQ.

12. **Reporting.** Formations are to establish protocols for the timely reporting of incidents in which alcohol is considered to be a factor, and similarly for incidents of failure to report such occurrences. It is recognised that a low number of disciplinary cases does not necessarily reflect an exemplary unit, and as such any abnormally low reporting patterns are to be investigated as a matter of routine. Action addressees are to report quarterly on the implementation of this Directive, any progress made, issues identified and any sanctions imposed. CFA's Directive 16/17 will formalise the R2.

13. **Data gathering.** Formations are to ensure that all disciplinary cases where alcohol is considered to be an aggravating factor are appropriately recorded on JPA. Data will be refined and exploited to enable a persistent profile of unit and formation discipline cases involving excessive consumption of alcohol such that poor performing units and formations can be appropriately supported.

14. **Breathalysing.** HQ Field Army will assess the utility and viability of incorporating breath testing to support measures to curb excessive alcohol consumption and issue direction in due course.

Timing

15. **Immediate.** This direction is effective on receipt.

Soft Facilities Management

16. Formation contract monitoring staff should identify potential conflicts with CRL Soft FM contracts and seek to ameliorate them at the lowest level, escalating as required.

Pan Army / Service Coherence

17. Pan Army coherence will be ensured through Reference A and subsequently AGAI 63. This direction will be copied to PSC to assist in the formulation of interim direction across PSC units.

18. HQ ARRC and JHC will need to be sensitive to the potentially differing approach across Joint and Multinational establishments, and any conflicting direction should be referred to HQ Field Army for arbitration.

CFA

Annex:

A. HQ Field Army Alcohol Direction – H2A Guidance.

HQ Field Army Alcohol Direction – H2A

