

# RASG

## A new way of tackling public under age drinking

A Retail of Alcohol Standards  
Group (RASG)  
Presentation



# Establishing RASG

- Serious failings in under age sales in 2005
- RASG was launched with aim to *‘Seek to eliminate underage sales by the end of 2006’*
- Supported by the UK Government
- Virtual network of most retailers across UK working together for first time



# The story so far...

- “Challenge 21” rapidly rolled out across UK
- Research commissioned into why check out staff make under age sales
- Radical new training programmes introduced
- Achieving significant and ongoing reduction in test purchase failures



# Challenge 21



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# TUSAC Campaign Results

	Off licences	On licences	All premises
<b>Test purchase operations</b>	7,408	1,558	8,966
<b>Sales</b>	1,025 (14%)	287 (18%)	1,312 (15%)
<b>PNDs issued</b>	752	250	1,002
<b>Premises targeted</b>	2,199	484	2,683
<b>At least 1 sale</b>	833 (38%)	231 (48%)	1,064 (40%)
<b>At least 2 sales</b>	174 (8%)	50 (10%)	224 (8%)
<b>At least 3 sales</b>	17 (1%)	6 (1%)	23 (1%)

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# Community Alcohol Partnership

- RASG continually looking at what could be done next to tackle the demand side
- Only way to create solutions was to ‘push every button’
- Working with Cambridgeshire Trading Standards in a specific area:
  - *The St Neot’s Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP)*



# CAP - benchmarking

- Measurement / benchmarking vital
- Trading Standards surveyed police, local residents, young people to get 'before' and 'after' viewpoints
- Police tracked incidents of anti-social behaviour involving under-18s and alcohol
- Litter 'counts' in areas where young people were known to congregate

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# CAP – Trading Standards & Police

- Joint Trading Standards and Police operations
- Increased focus on underage purchasers
- Increased focus on proxy purchasers
- Alcohol confiscation from under-18s

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# CAP – Retailers

- Local retailers sharing intelligence quickly with Trading Standards and Police
- Sharing information on broader local problems
- Dedicated 'phone numbers
- Operations planned in “hot spot” areas and stores informed in advance
- Better relationships not solely based on test purchase activity

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# Communicating the Message

- Retailers and Police jointly communicate key messages
- Handouts developed for school and in store use
- Local schools and sixth form college visits
- Letter home to parents of young offenders

# Ensuring local buy-in

- In addition to trading standards, police, schools and retailers:
- Councillors and School Governors
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- Local Member of Parliament
- Media Partner



# CAP – local coverage

## The Hunts Post

ST NEOTS and CAMBOURNE

Wednesday, September 12, 2007 Price 75p where sold (€2)



**A CAMPAIGN** is launched today (Wednesday) calling time on underage drinkers in St Neots.

The town is set for a test bed for a new community-based campaign which, if successful, could be extended across the county.

Over the next six weeks, the police will be working with Trading Standards, health organisations, youth groups and retailers to combat the issue.

While the problem is not isolated to St Neots – national research suggests about a third of youngsters bring drink – the organisations behind the campaign, called Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP), believe the scheme could help make a difference in the town.

On Friday and Saturday night teenagers can be spotted at various locations around the town (see 'Out on the Town' report on Page 15), gathering to drink and creating an atmosphere which has been described as intimidating and antisocial.

CAP hopes to put an end to this by working with the community to cut off the supply of alcohol to the children who choose to drink.

Cambridgepton county councillor 'Victor Lucas, cabinet member for Trading Standards, said: "Underage drinking is a concern across the UK and although Cambridgepton has a much better reputation for tackling the supply of alcohol to youngsters it is a problem in the county."

While Trading Standards focus only a handful of retailers have sold alcohol to under 18s, drink is still finding its way into the hands of children, increasing their health risks and, in certain circumstances, levels of criminal damage, leaving communities to foot the bill.

The campaign will tackle education work as well as intelligence gathering.

The Retail Alcohol Standards Group, which represents major chain stores, has pledged its support.

Chairman Dick Gray: "We believe it is vital to focus resources now on tackling underage offenders and drink buying on behalf of those under 18."

"Our efforts are in the front line of enforcement and we believe the strong relations the scheme will build by bringing together different retailers, community groups and Trading Standards will be invaluable in targeting underage drinking and proxy sales."

"These problems are best tackled by working together as a community and sharing expertise, so we hope this groundbreaking scheme will serve as an inspiration in other parts of the county."

"Cambridgepton will now lead the UK in a new project which, for the first time, draws in all agencies and the community to tackle underage drinking from all angles."

"St Neots will be at the forefront of this new Community Alcohol Partnership campaign."

"This is because we know St Neots has such a strong community spirit and will be able to lead the way for the rest of Cambo"

**Town at forefront of campaign**



**Lotts arranged**

A TOWN letter up and running by next summer St Neots Town has been invited to the Mayor, Brian...

At the meeting control but St Neots town think it could be June or July 2008 a good length of time. However, CI Chairman would hoping it would be next year. In Christmas week then for the time a report into suggests it would be a week to up to date £150 town.

able to lead the way for the rest of Cambo

intelligent and the county."

The campaign will depend on community involvement. The people of St Neots finance and organising arms, as well as schools and parents, are being asked to help by providing information about drinking habits, and by agreeing to buy alcohol for children.

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Alcohol Confiscated In Raid

30 October 2007

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**Post/news**

**Trailing the underage boozers**

Gangs of youths, some as young as 13, hang around in the shadows, swigging alcohol from cans and bottles, fading away from the road. At a skate park, a group of 40 youngsters congregates to drink the night away, leaving a trail of mess and destruction behind them. And at a fairly typical Friday night in St Neots, reporter ANDREW MCGILL discovered, but work is in hand to tackle the problem.

**ABOUT** one in five children aged 11 to 15 will admit to drinking alcohol in the past seven days, according to NHS figures.

In response to this problem, Cambridgepton police, in partnership with Trading Standards, health organisations, youth groups and retailers, today (Wednesday) launches a crackdown on underage drinking, with St Neots named as the focus town for the campaign, which is being called Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP).

While there are still enough to get into pubs populate the town centre, youths are expected to move away from the town centre to the surrounding areas.

It is 5pm on Friday evening and I am being given a tour of the town by the St Neots town council. The tour is not one for the tourists. Cambridgepton Trading Standards officer Richard Matthews and Nicki Piper are taking the tour to some of the so-called hotspots in the town.

Outside St Neots Community College, a group of about 10 youths are drinking in the shadows. Some are on bikes but the hill-side behind them shows this is no exception.

It is a scenic view as the grounds of Longshard Community College – it is clear that if young people want access to alcohol, they can get it.

"We regularly get licensed premises to check if they are selling or underage children," explains Piper. "The figures for the county has dropped sharply in the last few years, but kids are still getting the drink from somewhere."

"We are receiving more and more reports of alcohol being supplied to underage children by adults and even parents."

Although it is the biggest town in the county, St Neots has not been identified because of its problem with young drinkers.

Nicki explains: "The reason for focusing on St Neots is that it is a distinct area that does not spread and therefore we can use it as a model of other towns and judge the campaign's effectiveness."

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## The view from over the counter

Richard Matthews recalls some valuable lessons from two days' 'work experience' in a Spar shop

**BACK** in February, I found myself standing at the checkout of the Spar shop in Market Harborough.

It had been a similar shop many times before to test purchase and some members of staff about the results. But this time it was different – I was stood on the other side of the counter.

It had all come about following a throwaway comment from the Spar area manager after I had given another member of his staff a warning for selling to an underage person. "You don't understand what it's like – you've never worked in a shop," the manager had said.

Once away from the shop, I gave this some thought. As it happens, it was true, I had never worked in a shop.

I could hardly say that I did not understand what it was like to ask a customer for ID if they looked under 21 as was the shop's policy. Maybe if he knew, if I understood what it felt like to make a snap judgement on someone's age, followed by the inevitable complaining, I might be in a better position to get the change I wanted and stop the staff in stores from continually breaking the law.

And I must admit that it was a real eye opener. I volunteered for two shifts in two days and here is what I learned.



Back in Feb, Richard gets a taste of the behind the counter. He had to test purchase and some members of staff about the results. But this time it was different – I was stood on the other side of the counter.



**'While I still do not believe cashiers can use the fact they have been pressured by underage customers as an excuse for selling to them, I do have more empathy for staff working in shops after doing this'**

Newsdesk: 01400 411401



**SEIZED.** Just some of the alcohol seized by police, who are called to check if they are selling or underage children, explains Piper. "The figures for the county has dropped sharply in the last few years, but kids are still getting the drink from somewhere."

One girl taking the campaign to the streets. She said: "We do need a campaign. Young people get really drunk in public places. You see them as young as 13 or 14 and they are drinking because they think it's cool and they are just copying what adults do."

Asked what advice she would give to a younger person, she said: "I would say don't follow what other people are doing. If you get drunk you can get into trouble or you could hurt yourself."

Back on the road on Friday evening, we were on to the skate park. Having done a narrow lane to get as close as we can, it feels like we are trespassing in a gangland way.

Youth in baseball hats have been

AGE-RESTRICTED SALES

use the fact they have been pressured by underage customers as an excuse for selling to them. I do have more empathy for staff working in shops after doing this. What it has shown me is that we need to keep using different methods to tackle underage selling – not just enforcement.

At Cambridgepton Trading Standards, we have exceeded our Local Public Service Agreement alcohol sales reduction target by reducing underage sales of alcohol from 58 per cent in 2004 to 15 per cent in 2006. In 2007, we have new targets designed to help us work more positively with businesses by forming partnerships with the aim of better

ing their issues.

experience on the other side of the counter. This is crucial. We need to retailers' perspectives or we will struggle to change results in the shop manager was a bit and I took up the challenge. At who to warn him or his staff again, I don't know what it's like to

**DISCLAIMER:** Although Cambridgepton is the focus town for the campaign, it is not the only town in the county where we are working for a group of 30 people on the skate ramp multi. Similar sites from the ramp and the atmosphere is extremely intimidating for any non-locals visiting. This is a definite away from the town.

Richard said: "What the young people look for are areas where they 'fit in' be a habit."

Having the campaign, police and trading standards will be visiting schools, conducting street surveys and increasing support for underage drinking.

What are your experiences of underage drinking in your town? What should be done to tackle the problem? Are there things you can do to help? Let us know – email your views to editor@huntspost.co.uk

June 2007 15 Today 23



# Learnings

- **42 per cent decrease** in anti-social behaviour incidents from August 2007 (pre-project) to February 2008 (post-project)
- **94 per cent decrease** in under-age people found in possession of alcohol
- **92 per cent decrease** in alcohol-related litter at key hotspot areas
- No displacement to new areas
- Changed enforcement activity was **cost-neutral**
- Better relationship between retailers and enforcers
- Public perception that public spaces were more pleasant than previously – cleaner and fewer incidents of group drinking
- Winner of Better Regulation Award



# New CAPs in Cambridgeshire

- New CAP launched in the City of Cambridge
- Further roll outs planned for the rest of the county

*“This is the new way of doing business, it’s the way forward and it’s not going to change. **This is about the long term health of our children.**”*

*Mark Hopkins ACC Cambridgeshire Constabulary*

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# Launch of Cambridge City CAP



L-R

Alastair Roberts, Head of Safer Communities Section, Cambridge City Council,  
Nick Grant, Chair of RASG,  
Leon Livermore, Head of Trading Standards, Cambridgeshire CC,  
Inspector Jonathan Hutchinson, Neighbourhood Policing, Cambridgeshire Constabulary

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# Beyond Cambridgeshire

- RASG has launched a toolkit endorsed by the Home Office for roll out to other areas
- Youth Alcohol Action Plan commits Home Office to encouraging wider take up
- First county wide CAP launched in Kent
- Further CAPs planned in IoW and Reading





# The future

- This is a problem for all of us
- RASG will use CAP and other good local practice to formulate holistic responses to local problems relating to underage drinking
- Ensure that retailers continue to take the lead in combating underage sales



# The Vision

*“Shop staff have acted as our colleagues on the frontline and helped us to really bring home the impact of under-age drinking to the youngsters. We are never going to be able to cure under-age drinking completely but **we believe with this scheme we can make a real difference. We hope that our work in St Neots will act as a blueprint for launching CAPs across Cambridgeshire and beyond.**”*

*Leon Livermore*

*Head of Cambridgeshire Trading Standards*



# Further Information

RASG is supported by the Wine and Spirit  
Trade Association (WSTA)

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