



Our Ref: CC/RK

Your Ref:

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Dear

I have received a huge number of letters and E mails following the comments I made in a press release following the murder of Gary Newlove. I hope you will understand that it would take too long to reply to each one individually so I have put together some points which hopefully will address most of the issues which have been raised.

Chief Constables think long and hard before making an intervention such as I made, particularly because of our duty to avoid involvement in party politics. Our primary role has to be to enforce the law and reduce crime and disorder but I would suggest we are justified in highlighting issues which inhibit the achievement of that primary role.

In Cheshire my officers spend a very significant proportion of their time dealing with the impact of alcohol abuse. This is in terms of anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods and villages, the night time economy of pubs and clubs in town centres and the number of domestic violence incidents where alcohol is a feature. Alcohol is now cheaper, more available and stronger and this particularly impacts on young people who are not able to deal with the effects. They are vulnerable to becoming victims of crime and perpetrators of crime and young lads in many cases are more aggressive and challenging when in drink.

Police officers throughout the country are making strenuous efforts to deal with this problem through seizing alcohol from youngsters, ASBOs, test purchase operations and tighter control of licensed premises. We have moved more of our officers to late night patrols but this means they are not visible during the day when the public also wants to see them. I feel that enforcement alone will not reduce this problem unless practical steps are taken to deal with the alcohol culture in this country. The purpose of my press release was certainly not to take the spotlight from the police responsibility to enforce the law.

Many of those who have contacted me have made comments about my specific policy proposals. There was a lot of support for a complete ban on drinking in public places apart from those areas designated by the local council as suitable for public drinking. There was less support for an increase in price despite the fact that most international research indicates that this is the most effective way of reducing consumption. Perhaps it would be better to reduce duty on low strength beers but raise it on stronger forms of alcohol. On the issue of increasing the age to 21 most saw this as impractical. The Police experience is that most of our problems come from the purchase of alcohol from late night shops and off licenses and raising the age at which some forms of alcohol can be bought from these premises may be useful.

The issue of parental responsibility probably provoked most comment and support. Again police experience is that a significant minority of parents are supplying alcohol to their youngsters or are certainly turning a blind eye to their activities. Young people of whatever age need boundaries and there is a strong argument to say that many of those boundaries in respect of behaviour in public have been eroded. Parents need support but the system also needs to hold to account those who do not take their responsibilities seriously. There needs to be more facilities for young people to provide alternatives to public drinking.

The Police can continue to do their work of enforcement but this would be more effective if local people felt that they could have more influence on setting local police priorities and setting standards of conduct in their neighbourhood. The Criminal Justice System needs to operate at a much more local level so that local people feel that it is dealing effectively with the issues which matter most to them.

I will be putting all the various comments I have received into a report for the Home Office and for the Association of Chief Police Officers so that the strength of public feeling on this matter is recognised. I would like to thank you once again for contacting me. You can be assured that I will not be letting this matter rest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Fahy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'P'.

Peter Fahy
Chief Constable