

Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2014 – Response by Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)

SHAAP provides a coordinated, coherent and authoritative medical and clinical voice on the need to reduce the impact of alcohol related harm on the health and wellbeing of the people in Scotland. SHAAP was set up by the Scottish Medical Royal Colleges, through their Scottish Intercollegiate Group (SIGA) and is governed by an Executive Committee made up of members of the Royal Colleges.

We fully support the Bill's aim to reduce the drink driving limits and to make further provision for breath testing. There is compelling evidence to suggest that a reduction in the limits would make a positive impact in terms of reducing road traffic accidents and road traffic deaths.

Evidence submitted in 2010 by the British Medical Association to the House of Commons Transport Committee's inquiry into drink and drug driving law indicated that the relative risk of being involved in a road traffic crash for drivers with a reading of 80mg alcohol/100ml of blood was 10 times higher than for drivers with a zero blood alcohol reading. The relative crash risk for drivers with a reading of 50mg alcohol/100ml blood was twice the level than for drivers with a zero blood alcohol reading.

A new lower limit of 50 mg/100ml will allow the police, prosecutors and our courts to take more drivers off the road who pose a risk to public safety. It should also act as a deterrent in encouraging people not to drink and drive at all.

Given the evidence presented by the Institute of Alcohol Studies (*Alcohol and Drink Driving, 2010*) that drinking by drivers with blood alcohol levels of between 50mg% and 80mg% area is a significant but largely hidden cause of accidents, SHAAP anticipates that the new lower limit will be extremely beneficial. We are particularly pleased to see that the Bill prescribes lower limits for 'specified persons', such as someone who only held a licence for 2 years.

Measures to address drink driving will be enhanced by a robust national alcohol strategy based on the World Health Organisations 'best buys' of restricting availability and influencing price. We, therefore, urge the Northern Ireland Assembly to remain committed to tackling the underlying problems of alcohol consumption.

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