Reviewer's report

Title: Teenage drinking, alcohol availability and pricing: a study of risk and protective factors for alcohol related harms in school children

Version: 2 Date: 3 April 2009

Reviewer: Alasdair Forsyth

Reviewer's report:

Although there are some sampling issues (which are off-set to an extent by the sample size), I do like this paper and feel it is of much interest, given the current salience of the important issue which it addresses. Most of my previous comments have been dealt with well by the authors (these were mainly discretionary points which were addressed through additional referencing). I now have only a few minor concerns / comments to make for their further consideration.

Discretionary Revisions

1. (A3 & A4) Although it is encouraging that there was a strong correlation between school postcode deprivation and own home postcode deprivation, I still have some reservations about combining individuals who are deprivation coded by school postcode with those classified by home postcode. It did cross my mind that for consistency the authors might consider simply using school postcodes for all, stating that these were strongly correlated with the postcodes of their pupils.

2. (A8) I would still have preferred to see more than seven beverage categories. These are too broad, both in terms of product type and ABV within product types. I understand that for consistency it may be best to stick to categories used by national statistics, even if these are flawed. It would have been better to have had a more comprehensive number of categories to start with, which could be coded into these prior classifications when required.

I suspect that, rather than it being the case that less than 1% consume products such as MD20/20 or Lambrini etc., that these are likely to have been subsumed into wine by respondents (though the latter for example is perry). Perhaps it would best just to acknowledge that this approach was in-line with previous national surveys (though these may be less than perfect), rather than stating the figure “less than 1%”, which I imagine the manufacturers of certain products will quickly embrace as proof that they do not market to children. I know of no other product type which proudly trumpets its lack of market share (e.g. see Economic Times, 2009, with illustration by, McMillan, 2005 or Mann, 2007). I would therefore advise deleting this figure for this reason, perhaps replacing it with a comment such as that made for large volume beer, and also by providing an example of an ‘other’ beverage.

3. (A9-13) Related to the above, I suspect some of the large volume cider effect
may have been due to these tending to be containers for white cider (high ABV) as opposed to amber cider (weak ABV) which may be more often found in cans and bottles. A two litre bottle of white cider with 50% extra free, e.g. White Lightening, could contain 22.5 standard units (i.e. double what the authors have coded here). In any case, I would still support the authors’ contention here, against the comments made by another referee in points B3, B16 & B26, in that, for one reason or another, there is a large volume cider effect at play here, perhaps owing to drinking context, brand-image, etc.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Lightning_(cider)

References

Economic Times (2009) Dunk the Drink. April 1st

http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/Buckfast-sales-surge-after-Jamieson.2624524.jp

Mann, G. (2007) We Need to get Against Alcohol: Hitting out … Jim Wilson, Scottish Manager of J. Chandler & Co (Buckfast) Ltd., has called for the introduction of ID cards to help tackle under age drinking. Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser, November 8th.
http://www.acadvertiser.co.uk/lanarkshire-news/local-news/airdrie-news/2007/11/08/we-need-to-get-against-alcohol-

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.