

## **Minutes of the UK Centre for Tobacco & Alcohol Studies International Advisory Board meeting.**

ASH Scotland offices, Frederick Street, Edinburgh. 6 October 2015

Present: Mike Daube (Chair), John Britton (Director, UKCTAS), Alastair Bradstock (CRUK), James Cant (BHF), Ann McNeill (Deputy Director, UKCTAS), Linda Bauld (Deputy Director, UKCTAS), Penny Woods (BLF), Pia Makela (Helsinki University), Sheila Duffy (ASH Scotland), Alison Cox (CRUK), Deborah Arnott (ASH), Graeme Docherty, Chris Hill, Gavin Malloch (MRC, by phone), Wayne Hall (University of Queensland, by phone)

Apologies: Tim Stockwell, David Jernigan, Sally Casswell, Mike Knapton, Paul Belcher.

### **Introductions**

MD opened the meeting at 14.00, and welcomed everyone.

### **Evelyn Gillan**

MD paid tribute to Evelyn Gillan, a member of the IAB, who sadly passed away earlier this year. Her valuable contributions to the IAB in the past, and her well recognised wider contribution and passion for public health, were recognised.

### **Minutes of the meeting, 26 September 2014**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record, and JB gave a brief spoken report on progress on matters arising listed on page 3 of the minutes, as follows:

#### Translation of research into policy

UKCTAS had been very active in many areas where research was being translated into practice and policy. Examples of this include e-cigarettes and harm reduction, informing new UK low risk drinking guidelines, smoking in prisons and smoking in cars with children. Other examples include work into media campaigns and the pricing of alcohol. DA stated that the air-quality report carried out by UKCTAS had played a 'huge' role in the implementation of the smoke free prisons legislation.

#### International development

UKCTAS is involved in a range of overseas and international projects, but would like to do more. JB is aware of new funding opportunities that may allow this to happen. Our Masters and CPD modules are open to overseas students and delegates, and numbers taking the Nottingham Masters modules are expected to be higher this year.

#### Cross-fertilisation of tobacco/alcohol

LB mentioned a recent workshop in London organised by the Sheffield and Bath teams from UKCTAS (8 September, 2015) where researchers in the tobacco and alcohol communities met to formulate plans to synergise these areas of research. A report on findings from the meeting are being prepared and is expected to be published in the next few months.

#### Work into other effects of alcohol and tobacco

UKCTAS were increasingly looking at opportunities to investigate the links between poverty and tobacco/alcohol use. JC agreed there was a strong connection between alcohol and tobacco which could also extend to other areas of research (e.g. the food industry).

At the end of this discussion AC asked that for future meetings UKCTAS should prepare a briefing document detailing point by point how issues identified on the minutes had been addressed. UKCTAS attendees agreed to use this format in the future.

### **3. 2 year UKCTAS progress report**

This report documents UKCTAS work from 2013 to date, and highlights a number of research and policy developments achieved through UKCTAS work in that period.

## **1. Research activity**

JB guided the IAB through sections 7.1 to 7.8 of the report, highlighting research outputs of note (and some of their effects), policy achievements in sections 8.1 to 8.8, and methodological developments in sections 9.1 and 9.2, in over the past two years.

DA noted that whilst the research and policy engagement of UKCTAS was greatly appreciated, the collaborative work between academic researchers and advocacy groups was not clearly recognised in the report, and that sections 3.3 and 8.8 in particular should recognise the role of UKCTAS as a partner working with others should be made explicit.

Discussion on e-cigarettes recognised the controversies involved, recently and in particular in relation to the recent PHE report, the authors of which are part of UKCTAS. SD highlighted the need for objective evidence when assessing the effects of these products and commented that the issue of dual use required examination. AM noted that the PHE report had tried to present an objective analysis and included a note of caution on dual use and the need for such users to stop smoking completely and how services could support such efforts, but the resulting publicity did not pick up on all the elements of the report. JB said there had been a massive uptake in e-cigarettes for harm reduction and UKCTAS has drawn evidence on how harm reduction has help people quit smoking. LB added that youth uptake was a concern which needed to be carefully monitored. JB made it clear that views on the potential role of e-cigarettes differed within as well as outside UKCTAS and that UKCTAS was aware of the need to recognise these differences. It is for this reason that UKCTAS has not published a position statement on e-cigarettes.

However work on e-cigarettes provides a useful example of partnerships between a range of organisations on this complex issue. LB pointed to an omission in the report, which will be amended, highlighting the UK electronic cigarette research forum established by CRUK and Public Health England with UKCTAS. AM chairs forum meetings (3 per year) and LB, a colleague Kathryn Angus at Stirling and Nicola Smith from CRUK's health information team provide monthly evidence briefings which have been positively received by UKECRF members (who are drawn from academic, practice and policy).

## **3.2. Teaching programmes**

The tobacco Masters module continues to run in Nottingham, and CPD courses have now been held in Bath, Stirling, Edinburgh and Nottingham. Both are continually adapted to developments in science and policy. The tobacco CPD course was re-designed in 2015 to include new areas of research, and work was also underway to develop an online CPD on international tobacco control in partnership with the IUATLD. The second alcohol CPD course, held in Sheffield in September 2015, built on the success of the Edinburgh course in 2014. Venues for future courses are under consideration. The Masters module in alcohol will run for the first time at KCL in February 2016, as part of the MSc in Addiction Studies.

## **3.3. Public engagement**

UKCTAS continues to run user panels for tobacco and alcohol. The smokers panel is now based in Nottingham, the Bath panel having been wound down; the alcohol users' panel is running in Stirling. SD suggested that our user groups might expand to include people affected by tobacco smoke or concerned that they may be affected by electronic cigarette vapour. AM suggested that it might be more appropriate to study these areas using qualitative research.

UKCTAS has undertaken a radical redesign of its new website ([www.ukctas.net](http://www.ukctas.net)) led by Chris Hill, the Centre's Digital Media and Support Officer. JB complimented the site with

favourable comments from the group including GM, who commented it was in line with Decipher, Fuse and SPHRC websites (two other PHRCoEs). AC noted she would like a connection with the CRUK website and will direct CH to the relevant staff at CRUK.

The meeting halted for a short break at 15:30.

### **3.4. Feedback and discussion on future strategies and direction**

#### Relevance to policy

PM asked what proportion of UKCTAS is policy relevant. JB estimated 40% of papers had a link with policy, though it is difficult to be precise as in many cases research work is generic (for example behaviour change methods) and applicable across a range of policy options. LB stated the centre could do more, in particular by opening up larger scale collaborations to fill some gaps in policy work.

#### CRUK perspective

AC commented that CRUK funds a wide range of research and this includes translational research. UKCTAS's research on both alcohol and tobacco provides important evidence for CRUK particularly in its cancer prevention work. AC and AB described the new ICART initiative including £5m of funding over 5 years to support development work in Low and Middle Income countries (LMICs). As part of this CRUK would welcome opportunities for student/staff exchanges and similar initiatives between ICART and UKCTAS. JB mentioned that work with LMICs was challenging and often difficult to fund, but that return on investment in these settings was often very good. AH stated it would be useful to harness UKCTAS expertise to build capacity in LMICs (through mentoring, exchange visits etc). CRUK was commended by IAB members for developing this important initiative.

#### Restricting tobacco supply

Suggested by SD, who would like UKCTAS to consider work on methods of reducing retail availability of tobacco. DA cautioned against restricting availability of retail supply, as the Tabac system in France has resulted in a powerful lobbying group against supply policies. UKCTAS is carrying out a range of research with retailers.

#### Article 5.3

SD suggested that UKCTAS continue to look into article 5.3 implementation, with a view to supporting the best outcomes from the Scottish Government's planned strategic review of implementation as part of the 2015-18 strategy.

#### Communication with Advisory Board members

SD and PW suggested that in addition to publicising UKCTAS work through the Centre website, we take a more proactive line in informing Board members of new developments, not least so that these can be publicised more widely

#### Suggestions for future work

DA suggested work on the economics of tobacco, on morbidity (as opposed to mortality) and related costs (particularly for example in relation to dementia) and the impact of tobacco control measures over the past 20 years on these outcomes.

GM noted that the MRC want to fund prevention research to improve population approaches, modelling and embedding research and policy outcomes, and in health inequalities. He emphasised the importance of partnerships and the development of a multi-disciplinary approaches. He also updated the group on the NPRI initiative which has recently been positively reviewed.

It was suggested that UKCTAS respond to the current Academy of Medical Sciences consultation on future public health priorities [JB note post meeting: I have done this]

WH suggested complementing attempts to track alcohol prices (which is difficult given the wide and rapidly changing discounts and brand ranges) by using a panel of Centre students (say 10) to use on line pricing data to see how many units of alcohol that they can buy each week for varying budgets that may reflect that of low, middle and higher income (e.g. £20, £50) as an index of alcohol affordability that does not depend upon identifying specific alcohol products. It could also identify which types of beverage (beer, spirits etc) were most frequently discounted.

WH also mentioned a research collaboration he is involved in Australia assessing the feasibility of using waste water analysis of cotinine to estimate the amount of black market tobacco consumed in Australia. The TI regularly commissions "studies" by friendly accounting firms that claim to find that 15% of tobacco is illicit and hence tobacco taxes should be reduced so the Australian Tax Office (which is part funding the work) wants better data! WH is doing similar work on estimating alcohol consumption in real time using by waste water, and will update the group on progress.

PW noted the meeting today had provided a valuable education experience. BLF would like more evidence on the long-term effects of e-cigarettes, information on the contribution of tobacco smoke in external air quality, and updates on UKCTAS research findings as they become known.

JC asked whether UKCTAS would consider extending its reach of research topics to include other co-morbidities. DA noted the increasing difficulties of obtaining funding, and it may be a lot to commit to, but (JB noted) it was important to communicate the relative benefits of tobacco harm reduction compared to other topics, such as statin use. JC commented that building strategic partnerships across other areas would be useful.

MD suggested that UKCTAS might build more collaborations with other international groups, particularly in alcohol work; and work monitoring tobacco industry activities in LMICs, work into Article 5.3 and pressure group (eg Forest) analyses.

#### **4. Any other business**

##### Action on matters arising in future IAB meetings

AC asked for a document giving details on how each of the issues raised at the previous meeting had been addressed.

##### UKCTAS impact

MD suggested the centre produce a document to solely present the impacts UKCTAS had achieved.

It was requested that minutes of this meeting should be prepared and circulated promptly, and that more time is allocated to future meetings (today's meeting was scheduled for two hours, but continued for three). A longer duration would allow members to discuss points around specific areas, where the report and achievements can be discussed and future directions considered. PM suggested that the minutes of the UKCTAS Senior Management Group meetings should be made available to IAB members in future.

#### **5. Next meeting**

MD suggested the report on 2015-16 work should be circulated by the end of September 2016, with the IAB scheduled for 2 months later (end Nov/early Dec). Arrangements regarding date and venue will be made closer to the time.

MD then closed the meeting with comments complimenting UKCTAS on its work over the past two years, thanked all those who participated (particularly those who had travelled long distances) and closed the meeting at 16.58 pm.