



Independent
Broadcasters of Ireland

IBI Alcohol Codes

The Voluntary Code of Practice for Presenters

Background

The Board of the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland worked in conjunction with the Association of Advertisers in Ireland, the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland, Drinks Industry Group Ireland and the Health Promotion Unit at the Department of Health and Children to produce an Alcohol Code for the independent broadcasting industry.

The Code consisted of two sections:

1. **A fully monitored code of conduct on alcohol advertising and sponsorship of specific programmes.** Alcohol advertising and sponsorship will no longer be accepted on any programmes where greater than 33% of the audience group is under 18.
2. **A voluntary code of practice for presenters** that ensures that on air speech content by employees will not glamorise or encourage over consumption or abuse of alcohol particularly amongst young people.

Since January 1st 2006, the Code of Conduct on alcohol advertising and sponsorship of specific programmes has been adopted and implemented by independent broadcasting industry.

The Board of the IBI is now in a position to fulfil its commitment as set out in the original Alcohol Codes and present a Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters.

The Code of Practise for Presenters

1. Stations subscribing to this Code will adopt within their company policies a statement to the effect that on air speech content by employees of the station will at no time glamorise or encourage over consumption or abuse of alcohol particularly among young people. For example: On air “banter” between presenters and listeners occasionally links the idea of an enjoyable or fun night out with drinking too much. The code is aimed at ensuring presenters do not promote or encourage this linkage.
2. Stations will offer training to presenters explaining the Code and devising techniques to steer discussion/interviews away from content that contravenes the Code.
3. IBI will explore with the appropriate agencies the idea of an alcohol (and substance abuse) training module for presenters. This module would include material on the health and social impact of substance abuse as well as advice and interventions to assist those who may be at risk.
4. Stations will monitor the Code internally through the use of air checks and appropriate feedback to presenters.

What are the implications of this Code?

There are a number of key implications to this Code:

On air

- Presenters will need to re-orientate studio content around the interpretation of what constitutes a good night's entertainment. The Code is aimed at ensuring presenters do not promote a link between the over consumption and/or abuse of alcohol with recreation and entertainment and that they are also trained to steer interviewees away from promoting such a link. As radio and some television are live mediums, this will be an ongoing focus of presenters.

Off air

- Following discussions with Learning Waves (the in-service training initiative for independent stations) the IBI has incorporated the Voluntary Code of Practice for Presenters into the training modules developed by Learning Waves for staff working within the industry. Each individual station is responsible for training its own staff.

Will all discussion of alcohol be banned on nominated programmes?

In agreeing to draft and adopt this code, IBI members are conscious that the responsible use of alcohol is a legitimate component of everyday social life and discourse in Ireland. For this reason it is not the intention to seek to ban the use of all words or phrases related to alcohol or to prevent presenters from discussing the subject of alcohol. The intent of the Voluntary Code of Practice for Presenters is to ensure that alcohol is not discussed irresponsibly or glamorised.

The IBI is also mindful of the fact that it the implementation of the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters is ultimately the responsibility of each individual radio station. The IBI will ensure that sufficient training is made available for all broadcasters and that the necessary information is distributed to all presenters.

Implementation of the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters

On a practical level how do broadcasters, presenters and station management make sure that the content broadcast by them follows the Codes?

1. Presenters and Broadcasters

Presenters and broadcasters need to ensure that anything they do on air meets both the letter and spirit of the code.

- Show preparation
 - Ask yourself – do I need to be talking about drink and if so, will it go against the codes?
 - Ensure that a “drink” conversation is appropriate for the time of day;
 - Question whether drink is crucial to the story that you want to tell;
 - Don’t wear a hangover as a badge of courage.

- During the Show
 - Edit requests/dedications/texts before you read them out;
 - Pre-record and edit listener phone calls;
 - Don’t put drunken callers on the air or interview people who are drunk;
 - Steer live interviews away from glamorizing drink – if necessary distance yourself from remarks made.

Get the balance right!

2. Station Management

The management team in each station needs to ensure that each presenter and broadcaster is aware of the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters.

- Management in each station:
 - Needs to be socially responsible;
 - Must ensure that they understand and adhere to existing and new voluntary codes;
 - Must understand that adherence to the Codes will help each station to continue to enjoy a profitable relationship with the drinks industry and help to ensure that wherever possible the independent broadcasting industry regulates itself.

- Managing presenters and broadcaster:
 - Encourage and support presenters and broadcasters attendance at the IBI/Learning Waves training course on the Alcohol Codes which incorporates a training element on the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters;
 - Include the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters in the individual appraisals conducted with each member of staff;
 - Include a statement in the company policy to the effect that on air speech content by employees of the station will at no time glamorise or encourage over consumption or abuse of alcohol particularly among young people.

Monitoring the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters

The IBI will continue to adhere to the monitoring and control guidelines as outlines in the organisations Code of Conduct on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship of Specific Programmes. Where appropriate these guidelines will also apply to the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters. They read as follows:

- The BCI will take full cognisance of the codes when conducting the regular random monitoring of broadcasts;
- Any breaches of the codes detected during monitoring, will be reported to the Independent Monitoring Body;
- On receipt of a complaint, a sub-committee will examine each complaint and make its findings known to the board of the IBI;
- Member stations that are found in breach of the code will be notified and asked what steps they are taking to ensure no repetition of the breach, and to renew their commitment regarding adherence to the code;
- Where agreement can't be reached, the matter will be referred to the Minister for Health and Children for consideration.

In addition, the IBI will ensure that:

- Copies of the Voluntary Code of Practise for Presenters are sent to every independent broadcaster;
- A copy of the entire Alcohol Code will be included on the IBI website;
- It will continue to work with Learning Waves to ensure that the training courses being offered to broadcasters are relevant, accessible and beneficial.

Appendix I

Who is the IBI?

The Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI) is the representative body for Ireland's independent commercial broadcasters, both television and radio. The mission of the IBI is to champion the agenda of independent broadcasters in Ireland and to be a distinct and coherent national voice in the ongoing campaign for competitive equality across the sector.