



Mr Richard Scudamore  
Premier League  
30 Gloucester Place  
London  
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## **Open letter from the Alcohol Health Alliance (AHA UK)**

25 March 2015

Dear Mr Scudamore,

We write to you as public health professionals to express our deep concern at reports that Guinness producer Diageo intends to bid for the next title sponsorship of the English Premier League<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the obvious conflict between drinking alcohol and sporting performance, linking alcohol and sport through sponsorship deals communicates a legitimacy and status to alcohol that belies the significant health and social harms associated with its use.

Alcohol brands already dominate sporting events that attract children as well as adults, creating automatic associations between alcohol brands and sport that are cumulative, unconscious and built up over years. As a result, children as young as 10 years old are highly familiar with alcohol brands<sup>2</sup>, with football clubs and tournaments strongly associated with the beer brands that sponsor them. There is strong evidence that exposure to alcohol marketing leads young people to drink more, and to drink at an earlier age<sup>3</sup>.

The Premier League says its strategy is to support clubs in their role as hubs at the heart of their communities and build effective partnerships to deliver a wide range of activities for young people. It would therefore, in our view, be inappropriate to promote the family-friendly nature of Premier League football and grassroots youth development activity, if the league was to be sponsored by an adult-only product that has a negative impact on children, families and communities up and down the country. It would be considered outrageous if tobacco companies were to become sponsors of the Premier League, so we question why it should be acceptable for the alcohol industry. Alcohol, like tobacco, is a class 1 carcinogen.

A recent survey from the AHA found that the majority of the public supported restrictions on alcohol companies sponsoring sporting events and over two thirds agree that alcohol companies sponsoring sporting events sends the message to children that drinking alcohol is a normal part of enjoying these activities.

Diageo's pursuit of the Premier League sponsorship is also in our view a particularly cynical attempt to harness the excitement and glamour of English premiership football to push consumption of its products in developing countries. Many low- to middle-income countries in Asia and Africa, where the Premier League is keenly watched, have relatively young populations with a low prevalence of alcohol consumption and many abstainers. The health systems in these countries do not have the capacity to cope with the additional public health burden that will inevitably follow any rise in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://news.sky.com/story/1417528/guinness-battles-rivals-for-premier-league-deal> Accessed 23/03/15

<sup>2</sup> Cogent Research & Analysis Ltd (2014) *Primary Schoolchildren Brand Recognition Study*

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, P. de Bruijn, A. Angus, K. Gordon, R. and Hastings, G. (2009) *Impact of Alcohol Advertising and Media Exposure on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies*, *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 44 (3) pp.229-243

population alcohol consumption. The targeting of new markets in developing countries through alcohol marketing and sponsorship campaigns is contrary to the guiding principles of the WHO Global Strategy on alcohol<sup>4</sup>.

As the most watched football league in the world, you are in a prime position to promote healthy lifestyles and inspire participation. We call on you to protect the health and wellbeing of young people around the world by sourcing sponsorship outside of the alcohol industry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Gilmore". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore  
Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance UK

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<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation (2010) *Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol* Available at: [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/activities/gsrhua/en/](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/gsrhua/en/) Last accessed 23/03/15