

Report

Body:	Scrutiny Committee
Date:	6 th July 2009 Scrutiny Meeting
Subject:	Alcohol & Young People Review
Report Of:	Kareen Plympton, Licensing Manager
Ward(s)	All
Purpose	Information & Progress Report on Scrutiny Review – Alcohol & Young People.
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This Scrutiny Review looks at the issues surrounding young people under the age of eighteen and associated alcohol misuse. Surveys were undertaken with 1000+ residents of Eastbourne, via the Citizen's Panel and with young people under the age of eighteen via the Youth Forum. A series of partnership meetings were held with key organisations, including representatives from Sussex Police, Trading Standards, the Primary Healthcare Trust, East Sussex County Council and Crime Reduction Partnership.

1.2 In summary:

- Citizen's Panel respondents felt that there was a significant problem with underage drinking and alcohol related youth crime and disorder. This correlates with the young people's views that alcohol causes a loss of judgement and an increased likelihood of getting into trouble, becoming involved in crime as well as causing aggression, arguments and violence.
- Citizen's Panel respondents perceived that the majority of underage drinking took place in the Town Centre, within public parks and gardens. Whilst young people favoured parks and gardens as the place to consume alcohol, the pattern of consumption is Borough wide.
- Boredom, a lack of activities and peer pressure are identified by both the Citizen's Panel and young people alike as the most common reasons why they choose to drink

- It was a shared view that alcohol is usually obtained by “proxy purchasing,” by a person over the age of eighteen known to them purchasing alcohol on their behalf.
- For young people, convenience stores were the favoured location where alcohol is obtained.
- 37% and 22% of the Citizen’s Panel felt that the Police and Council respectively dealt with underage drinking, crime and disorder well. This may be due to a lack of knowledge about the work being undertaken to tackle the issues and hi-lights a need to better publicise campaigns, using the Council website and local media.
- Interestingly, the Citizen’s Panel felt that better education of parents and guardians would tackle the issue of underage drinking, coupled with better enforcement and prosecution of those selling to persons under the age of eighteen. It also recognised that there are insufficient facilities for young people.
- The issues of education and enforcement were not a high priority for young people, who appeared to consume alcohol irrespective of the consequences. The motivating factor in diverting young people away from alcohol misuse was by providing a diverse range of activities and facilities across the Borough.
- Further work needs to be undertaken in harmonising the partnership approach to tackling issues of underage drinking and alcohol related crime and disorder.

This can be achieved, through enforcement activity, education of young people, parents, guardians and retail outlets. Further work at a local and national level needs to be undertaken with the retail industry to promote the responsible marketing and management of licensed premises, balanced against further investment into youth focussed diversionary activities to engage young people in constructive alternatives.

- The Action Plan aligned to this Review provides a mechanism through which resources can be targeted, progress monitored and actions reviewed. This is included at Appendix 6.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Following direction from the Scrutiny Panel in September 2008, Councillors Heaps and Goodyear, in conjunction with Kareen Plympton, Licensing Manager, commenced work examining the issues involving alcohol misuse in the Borough.
- 2.2 The focus of the Scrutiny Review was discussed at length at an initial scoping meeting on 11th November 2008. An overview of the meeting is included at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The issue of those defined as “problem drinkers” and “street drinkers” was covered during this exercise. Significant work is ongoing by Partners, including Sussex Police, Eastbourne Borough Council and the Primary Health Care Trust to tackle such, including enforcement action, treatment and support services.
- 2.4 It was agreed that this would not be the focus of the Review, however any outcomes arising from this work could be reflected as part of a wider Scrutiny Action Plan, since the issues are intrinsically linked.
- 2.5 Members felt it important to ascertain the extent of the challenges posed in relation to young people and alcohol. It was agreed that this would be the focus of this Review. A schedule of activities forming the information gathering process as part of the Review is included at Appendix 2.

3.0 Scope of Review

- 3.1 Whilst the focus of the Scrutiny Review would be around young people under the age of eighteen and associated alcohol misuse, it is acknowledged that a significant amount of work has already been undertaken in this area, and that existing Action Plans and Partners play a key role in shaping and informing the Review.
- 3.2 A series of Focus Groups and associated Action Plans already exist within the Borough. These play a key role in identifying issues and implementing measures to tackle the issues surrounding young people, alcohol misuse, crime and disorder in conjunction with education, health, welfare and treatment services. These include:
 - The Violent Crime Action Plan
 - Anti Social Behaviour Plan
 - Prevent & Deter Action Plan
 - Safer Communities Alcohol Action Plan & Scrutiny Review into alcohol misuse, children and young people 2008.
 - East Sussex Alcohol Strategy
 - Crime Reduction Partnership Action Plan
 - Devonshire Project
 - Youth Development Service – various

- Intelligence gathering Forums – Licensing Action Group, Joint Action Group, Business Crime and Nightwatch.
- Youth Alcohol Action Plan

3.3 The Review will look at:

- Why young people drink
- Where they drink
- Where and how they obtain alcohol
- What would stop them drinking alcohol
- What, if any activities would divert them from engaging in alcohol consumption, related anti social behaviour and nuisance.

4.0 National Perspective

4.1 The number of young people aged between 11-15 who are drinking alcohol is actually falling. The number of young people who have ever had an alcoholic drink has dropped from 65% in 1994 to 55% in 2006. However, the volume of alcohol being consumed is rising. In 1990, young people drank on average 5 units per week, however, by 2006 this had risen to an average of 11 units per week.

4.2 The most popular drinks consumed by young people in 2006 were beer, lager and cider, drunk by 72% of young people, spirits were drunk by 63% of young people and alcopops consumed by 60% of young people.

4.3 The TellUs3 Local Authority Report, issued by OFSTED in September 2008, a survey of primary and secondary school children included questions relating to alcohol consumption both nationally and in East Sussex, It indicates that 40% of those surveyed had never been drunk. Only 17% indicated that they had never had an alcoholic drink.

5.0 Information Gathering

Attendance At Conference

5.1 Councillor Heaps, Councillor Goodyear and the Licensing Manager attended seminars in London on the 12th November 2008 and 22nd April 2009 exploring the issues of binge drinking and alcohol misuse amongst young people as well as Safe, Sensible Social, the National Alcohol Strategy." This National Alcohol strategy looks at a range of steps to tackle alcohol related issues, including:

- Better education and communication through media campaigns.
- Improving health and treatment services
- Combating alcohol related crime and disorder using new enforcement powers afforded by the Licensing Act 2003 and the Violent Crime Act 2006.
- Working with the alcohol industry to promote responsible marketing. Measures to include health messages on alcohol to

educate and inform

- Promotion of local partnerships to promote the responsible management of licensed premises.
- Creation of an independent charity, the Drinkaware Trust to promote sensible drinking.

5.2 These conferences' helped to confirm that the issues raised in relation to underage sales, including proxy purchasing, education and enforcement are key in tackling underage consumption, alongside an overall need to improve youth services and activities are not Eastbourne specific, but follow trends and challenges nationally.

6.0 Citizens Panel

6.1 Councillor Heaps and Goodyear were involved in the development of a questionnaire for the Citizen's Panel and it's final form agreed on 16th January 2009. A copy of the questionnaire is included at Appendix 3.

6.2 In common with previous Citizen's Panel work, this was conducted with 1000+ Eastbourne residents. However, on this occasion, a combined postal and telephone survey was undertaken in order to maximise the rate of response to SMSR, the company commissioned to undertake the survey on behalf of the Council in March/April 2009.

6.3 It was also acknowledged that the previous Scrutiny Review in relation to youth provision and activities in the Borough provides a valuable resource in indicating the type of facilities that the residents of Eastbourne believe young people of Eastbourne want. This has been used to inform this Review.

6.4 A copy of the Scrutiny Report can be found at www.eastbourne.gov.uk/scrutiny. However, in terms of an Action Plan, this should be read in conjunction with the Devonshire Project Action Plan which looks at a variety of measures to upgrade and develop youth play facilities and services in Devonshire Ward.

6.5 In summary, the Citizen Panel results indicated the following:

- 81% agreed to some extent that there is a significant problem with underage drinking and alcohol related youth disorder in Eastbourne, with 40% strongly agreeing.
- The Town Centre was thought to be the main area where underage drinking was most apparent (36%) and felt that underage drinkers were most likely to drink alcohol in the town's parks and gardens (68%).
- Respondents thought that 'Peer Pressure' (84%) was the main reason that young people drink alcohol and agreed that underage drinkers are most likely to get their alcohol from persons over the age of 18 buying it on their behalf – proxy purchasing (87%)

- 37% of respondents agreed that the Police deal quickly and effectively deal with the issue of underage drinking and alcohol related anti social behaviour, whilst 22% of respondents felt that the Council dealt appropriately with these issues.
- 22% agreed that there are adequate services to deal quickly and effectively with the issue.
- Overall agreement with all of the suggested steps to be taken to tackle the issue of underage drinking was extremely high, with over four fifths agreeing to some extent with all six steps. 'Better education of parents and guardians' (88%) was thought to be the most effective step.
- 378 (41%) would like to attend a further meeting to discuss the issues and topics covered in the survey.

6.7 A full copy of the Citizen's Panel findings is included at Appendix 4. It was agreed by Members that the Citizens Panel concentrated on the resident adult population of Eastbourne and work would need to be undertaken with young people falling into the under eighteen target audience. This is addressed later in the report.

7.0 Neighbourhood Panel Priorities

7.1 Research of the top three priorities cited by the Borough's Neighbourhood Panel as per ward, indicate the following:

- Meads – Anti social behaviour by some students at night
- Lower Meads – Anti social behaviour from young people
- Willingdon Trees – Underage drinking
- Hampden Park – Crime related to underage drinking and proxy purchasing
- Downside – Underage drinking and youth disorder
- Shinewater – Anti social behaviour and underage drinking
- North Langley – Anti social behaviour and street drinking
- Old Town – Underage drinking and youths congregating in Central Avenue
- Summerdown – Underage drinking and purchase of alcohol
- Upperton- Anti social behaviour
- Sovereign Harbour – Anti social behaviour

8.0 Partnership Working

8.1 A series of meetings have been undertaken with statutory partners and organisations involved in dealing with young people in a variety of contexts, including:

- Chief Inspector Dick Coates & Inspector Nick Wainwright, Sussex Police
- Sophie Mohns Underage Sales Co-ordinator – Eastbourne Trading Standards.

- John Peerless, Principal Trading Standards Officer, Brighton & Hove City Council
- Natasha Scully, Youth Worker Eastbourne Borough Council
- Nicky Millward – Community Safety, East Sussex County Council
- Bob Gough, Crime Reduction Partnership Co-ordinator

8.2 A schedule of meetings undertaken, and a summary of discussions is included at Appendix 6.

8.3 There is already significant work being undertaken locally by statutory partners in relation to alcohol misuse, particularly amongst young people, which can be categorised into health, enforcement, education and diversion.

9.0 Health

9.1 Significant work has been undertaken by the Primary Health Care Trust as well as voluntary and statutory partners, in relation to the health, wellbeing, education and treatment services available to tackle the issue of under age drinking.

9.2 This ongoing work is acknowledged as key to tackling the issues at hand, and form part of the local and East Sussex Alcohol Strategy. However, this is not the focus of this review.

10.0 Enforcement

10.1 Enforcement partners from Sussex Police, East Sussex Trading Standards and the Council's Licensing Team have undertaken extensive work to tackle underage drinking, including:

- **Targeted multi agency enforcement activity** to licensed premises and/or problem areas. This includes enforcement visits and test purchasing under the Licensing Act 2003.
- **Operation Blitz** – covering Thursday, Friday, Saturday evenings, school holidays and other “notable” occasions to tackle alcohol related anti social behaviour.
- **Government and locally funded initiatives** to tackle underage drinking focussed on alcohol misuse. For example, National Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaign, (AMEC), Operation Marble
- **Confiscation and dispersal powers** to disperse groups of young people and seize alcohol.
- **Responsible Retailing Schemes** for example, Challenge 21 Policy, acceptance of recognised forms of identification.
- **Development of the Community Alcohol Partnership** – a partnership with statutory enforcement agencies, the retail industry and the wider community in shaping services, managing perception and education in relation to responsible retailing in relation to underage drinking.

- **Intelligence Gathering Forums to allow targeted activity.** Joint Agency Group (JAG) and Licensing Action Group (LAG) helping to provide a link between alcohol, young people, anti social behaviour and crime in the Borough's parks and gardens. This correlates with patterns of alcohol consumption amongst young people. This includes various town centre locations, Hampden Park, open spaces and parks in the Old Town area.

11.0 Education

11.1 Various initiatives are in place to educate and inform young people of the consequences of alcohol misuse. There is also an opportunity to engage further with parents/guardians. Activities include:

- Local and national media campaigns to highlight activities promoting healthy living and safer socialising messages. For example, the Government's "Know Your Limits Campaign," Safe Haven Bus, school based education initiatives.
- Safer Pubbing and Clubbing Group. Joint agency approach to tackle alcohol misuse and binge drinking, primarily amongst the 18-25 age range. However, measures to promote safer socialising and responsible drinking are relevant to all age groups.
- Launch of the Street Pastor Scheme in July 2009, creating an "urban trinity" offering help and support to vulnerable people, particularly during the evening and night time.
- Education and engagement via other youth activity, for example, the Youth Forum, Charlies Youth Centre in relation to a range of issues, including alcohol misuse.

12.0 Diversion

12.1 There is already established youth provision across the Borough to divert young people from anti social behaviour and alcohol misuse, however provision is patchy and is under review, including:

- 12.2
- Refurbishment of current facilities and various activities arranged by Partners including Eastbourne Borough Council, Youth Development Service and Eastbourne Homes. This includes football, basketball, swimming, street dance, multi sports and youth clubs
 - Exploration of under 18 specific venues in the evenings.

13.0 Targeting Young People Youth Forum

- 13.1 It was acknowledged that the Citizen's Panel focuses on the adult population of Eastbourne and that the Review needed to work with young people of the Borough in relation to the issues of alcohol consumption, anti social behaviour and youth activities. This has enabled the Review to obtain the views of young people, helping to target resources, and ensure that resultant activities receive the maximum take up.
- 13.2 Following research, it was decided that the best way to engage with young people under the age of eighteen would be by way of face to face interaction.
- 13.3 The opportunity to communicate with young people through Facebook and Bebo was considered, but discounted due to the challenges surrounding the management of such sites. However, young people are invited to share their views via the Council's own website www.eastbourne.gov.uk/youth. The potential to create a Youth Forum specific website is also being explored.
- 13.4 Letters were sent to educational establishments by the Council's Youth Engagement Officer inviting young people to participate in the Youth Forum.
- 13.5 This Forum targeted the 12 -17 year old age bracket, with the aim of helping inform the Council's approach to tackling the issues surrounding young people and alcohol misuse. Attendance is incentive based, insofar as participation at 3 out of 4 Youth Forums qualifies the young person to a free day trip during the summer vacation.
- 13.6 A dedicated Youth Forum to discuss these issues was held on 29th April 2009 at "Charlies Youth Centre," Seaside Road, Eastbourne. This was a conscious decision to raise the profile of the venue and to choose a "neutral" environment where young people would feel relaxed and able to share their views.
- 13.7 14 young people attended the session, along with 7 adults. Councillors, members of Eastbourne Borough Council, Youth Development Service, Sussex Police and the Youth Bank were active participants at the Forum.

14.0 Summary Of Results

- 14.1 The ages of the young people attending ranged from 11 – 15 years, from a variety of educational establishments and/or via activity groups managed by the Youth Development Service. Using a variety of participation methods, young people were asked to comment on the following.

14.2 Where Do You Drink?

i)

Young people were asked to plot on a map where they drank alcohol. The results indicate that:

- The majority drank with friends in the Borough's parks and gardens, for example Devonshire Park, Hampden Park, Seafront, Archery Recreational Ground, Shinewater Park. This was seen as an area where drinking and related behaviour could be relatively well concealed.
- A smaller proportion of young people identified that they drank in the towns streets as part of a group.
- Several identified that they drank alcohol at home with the full knowledge of parents/guardians.
- Public houses were also identified, although upon further exploration it appears that young people do not access pubs and clubs to the same degree to obtain alcohol since the environment is considered adult focussed, and are unappealing. There are increased chances of being recognised by an adult known to them which increases the chances of being caught or challenged regarding identity and age.

The age at which young people claimed to have started drinking ranged from age 11 – 12, increasing in prevalence in the 15+ age bracket. Respondents indicated that, in addition to the factors identified, they started drinking on special occasions, under parental supervision and older sibling's have an influence on their drinking habits.

It was also identified that as an age restricted product, people under eighteen wanted to try and obtain and consume alcohol to prove that they could circumnavigate the system, to show off, prove a point and because they liked the taste of certain brands of alcohol, for example, alcopops.

It was also inferred that the cost, branding and labelling of alcohol play a role in influencing selection.

ii)

What are the Good and Bad Points About Drinking Alcohol?

Drinking Alcohol Good Points	Drinking Alcohol Bad Points
Can meet people and have a laugh with my mates (13)	Can get hurt. Makes me feel sick/dizzy/unwell/causes short and long term damage to health (16)

Helps to lose my inhibitions, helps me to relax and gives me confidence (10)	Makes me get into trouble and causes crime (8)
Gets rid of stress, allows me to forget my problems and relaxes me (8)	Gives me a headache or causes a "hangover." (8)
Its fun and sociable (8)	Causes aggression, arguments and violence (7)
It tastes nice (5)	Causes me to make poor judgements and makes me forgetful (6)
Gets me out of house (1)	Expensive (5)
Other reasons	It's addictive (3) Makes me fat (2) It's a depressant (1) Gateway to other drugs (1) Lose friends, family, job (1) Can be intimidating for other people to be faced with drunk kids (1)

iii) Why do young people drink?

Overall, the most popular answers offered were the following:

- Boredom and a lack of other activities
- Peer pressure and a desire to "prove something."
- It's not allowed so young people want to try it because it's prohibited. Young people try and test the age restrictions.
- Respondents indicated that whilst poor parenting, the marketing of alcohol and a lack of education played a role in influencing why young people drink, this played less of a role in decision making.

iv) How do you obtain alcohol?

- 9 indicated that they obtained alcohol from people over the age of eighteen purchasing it on their behalf, known as "proxy purchasing." In the majority of cases this was by a person known to them, although 6 also indicated that they would approach a stranger to purchase it on their behalf
- 3 respondents indicated that they used fake identification sourced from the internet or used an older sibling's identification

- 2 respondents indicated that they drank their parents/guardians alcohol without their knowledge

Other tactics are also used to obtain alcohol:

- Premises do not challenge or ask for proof of age
- Parents allow supervised/unsupervised consumption of alcohol in a home environment
- Persuasion, intimidation or bullying of a retail outlet into selling them the alcohol even where service has originally been denied. Respondents reported that they were more likely to target smaller independent stores where there is less security or where the unit is staffed by persons where English is not a first language, since it was perceived that these were easier targets.
- Steal it from the premises and/or undertake "Crate Running."* This practice involves circumstances where the retail unit places crates of alcohol at the front of the premises due to a promotion or similar. Young people then run in, grab a crate and run.

v) Where do you obtain alcohol from?

Multiple answers were received in relation to this question.

Most popular Convenience Stores (11)

- Sites don't check identification or ask for it."
- Where the premises is staffed by persons whose first language is not English, it was perceived that it is easier to confuse or intimidate staff into sales
- Premises are desperate for money so will sell alcohol
- Easier to steal it from these premises due to no or lower levels of security

Large Supermarkets (5)

- Send in one person who is over eighteen to purchase alcohol on behalf of under eighteens or ask friends over eighteen to purchase it from this source. (Proxy purchasing)
- Steal it and/or do "crate running."*
- This source of supply was generally recognised as much cheaper than smaller units and/or pubs.

Parents/Guardian provide alcohol. (4)

- Parents may buy alcohol for parties for young people to consume
- Alcohol is consumed under adult/family supervision

Pubs/ Clubs

In general, the group hadn't tried to obtain alcohol from pubs or clubs because the environment was not appealing to them in so far as it was seen as adult. One or two individuals admitted "testing" the premises repeatedly to see if they could get served.

There was a perception that pubs are much more costly, and concerns were raised that young people felt they more likely to be asked for identification in pubs/clubs and challenged about their presence. Several identified that it was relatively easy to hide in a group of older individuals, or to use fake or the borrowed identification of a person over eighteen to gain access and obtain alcohol, as identification was often not properly checked by staff.

It was agreed that young people preferred to drink in the Borough's parks or other open spaces where there are no adults, activities are less visible and therefore less open to challenge or seizure of alcohol.

vi) What would prevent you drinking?

A general discussion around the subject solicited many views, but primarily focussed on the importance of diversionary activities to give young people alternatives including:

- Youth Clubs throughout the week across the Borough, not just focussed on the Town Centre
- Provision of an Eastbourne Youth Card for 12-17 year olds offering free/subsidised access to leisure facilities and activities.
- Further development of clubs – Scouts, Army Cadets, Sports
- Graffiti wall for young people to use
- Urban Art Sessions
- Under 18s events; dance events to run later than 10pm and targeted for specific age groups (12-14 and 15-17)
- Dedicated recording studio
- Provision of a youth house and exposure to "risky things" to allow young people to experiment in a "safe" environment.

It was interesting to note that the issues of alcohol education, impact health and consequences of underage consumption in relation to enforcement were not mentioned by the young people at this stage.

Many seemed keen to obtain and consume alcohol before the legal age, with the reasons why they drink offering an insight into the perceived positive and negative elements of alcohol consumption.

15.0 Conclusion

- 15.1 Alcohol plays an important role in British culture and is widely associated with socialising and relaxing. However, it takes its toll on the country and is costing more than 20 billion pounds per year in terms of health, crime and anti social behaviour, as well as causing a loss of productivity in the workplace and social problems such as family breakdown.
- 15.2 The nature of the evidence gathering has revealed to Members' the wide ranging issues that lie behind the issues of underage drinking and its impact on both communities, young people their families and support services.
- 15.3 Much work is being done at a local level to tackle alcohol related anti social behaviour by young people
- 15.4 Enforcement is balanced against strategies to promote healthy living, harm reduction information, and diversionary activities for young people.
- 15.5 This is often in conflict with the national messages regarding the availability of alcohol 24 hours a day, the relative cost of such, advertising and marketing campaigns, the binge drinking culture and perceived social acceptance.
- 15.5 The recommendations included in the Action Plan included at Appendix 6 are broadly transferable and involve Member, Partner and public engagement. The Plan focuses on the key areas of enforcement, education and diversion as a means to tackle the issues raised.

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A copy of the background papers used in compiling this report is available on request.