

Young People, Alcohol and Innovation

**Building the Evidence from
Experience**



The South West Alcohol Improvement Programme supports activity across the region to reduce alcohol related health harms and alcohol attributable hospital admissions.

In 2008 preventing alcohol related harm among children and young people was identified as a public health priority for the region. It was recognised that the evidence base concerning effectiveness in reducing alcohol misuse among children and young people is limited. As a result of this an Innovations Fund was established to facilitate progress in this area.

Between April 2009 and March 2011, five projects across the region were supported to develop and deliver innovative services and guidance aimed at reducing alcohol related harm and improving resilience and wellbeing among young people.

The five projects were:

- [Swindon Step Up Step Down](#), led by Uturn, a specialist alcohol agency in Swindon, that developed an alcohol champion scheme to increase confidence and effectiveness among youth services in delivering early alcohol interventions.
- [Bath & North East Somerset ASH project](#), led by In-volve Project 28, an alcohol and sexual health project that focussed on developing and delivering 'young people friendly' brief interventions.
- [Gloucestershire Youth Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme](#), a joint initiative between the Youth Offending Service, the police and local young people's substance misuse service that delivered assessments and interventions for under 18's who have been arrested.

- [Plymouth Locality Alcohol Support Initiative](#), a partnership between three voluntary sector organisations that focused on enhancing skills and knowledge within local communities thus allowing young people more choice in who they access support from regarding their alcohol use.
- [Alcohol Concern and the South West Alcohol Improvement Programme](#), a joint initiative developing a tool kit resource and training package to improve responses to vulnerable young people at risk of alcohol related harm.

This briefing provides details of the above projects and describes the challenges and successes they faced in their efforts to improve responses and develop the evidence base in this area. It will be of interest to individuals and organisations responsible for developing and commissioning services for young people and anyone involved in working with and supporting young people.

All of the Innovations Projects are keen to extend their experiences and learning and relevant contact details are provided in this briefing to facilitate that.

Thanks are due to all projects featured in this report and to Rowan Miller, Deputy Regional Alcohol Manager for leading this Innovations Programme.

Laura Juett,
Regional Alcohol Manager,
August 2011

Step Up Step Down

Swindon

Uturn is a specialist service in Swindon that provides support, help and guidance to young people and their families who have alcohol and drug-related problems. The service is targeted at 10 to 18 year-olds and provides a range of interventions including assessment, cognitive-behavioural treatment, motivational interviewing and specialist prescribing. The service also provides support to parents and carers plus training and consultancy to a broad range of professionals working with young people who misuse alcohol and substances.

Staff from Uturn and youth workers in Swindon were concerned that young people in the area were not accessing support for needs and concerns relating to alcohol. Monitoring showed that from 2005 to 2008 the number of young people with an alcohol related problem being referred to Uturn was negligible. During that time only 14 young people were referred to the service and only seven of those received a structured intervention. This profile was markedly different from other comparable young people's substance misuse services in the region who worked with higher numbers of young people with alcohol related needs during that time.

● The Approach

The overall aim of the project was to reduce alcohol related harm in young people through improved access to, and take up of information, advice and support services.

The core approach was to build workforce capacity through engaging with, and supporting generic young people's workers and targeted staff and youth workers to deliver alcohol interventions.

The distinct approach of this project was establishing a dedicated Alcohol Champion post within the specialist young person's substance misuse service. This role provided awareness and training, access to resources and face-to-face supervisory contact for integrated (multi-disciplinary) locality teams.

● At the outset the project identified the following outcomes:

- Staff within integrated locality teams to feel more confident and skilled in supporting young people around alcohol issues.
- An improved working relationship between Uturn and locality teams.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of young people and alcohol use/misuse by youth workers.
- Youth workers to have a clear understanding of the Uturn service including referral pathways and processes.
- Youth workers to be clear of their role within the local young person's alcohol treatment system.

The project was evaluated through feedback from the training and support delivered to the locality teams and from the young people and parents who received support from the Uturn service.

● Learning

The project was very successful in increasing the awareness of alcohol issues among youth workers and enhancing the profile of the Uturn service. This in turn led to more young people and their families receiving support for alcohol issues. Locality staff responded positively to the training and contact with the specialist service through the Alcohol Champion and report feeling better equipped to work with young people around alcohol issues.

● Indications of success

Between June 2009 and March 2011 49 young people received structured support for alcohol related problems. Telephone support was provided to a further 200 individuals. This is in stark comparison with the 14 young people referred in the three years between 2005 and 2008

The young people and staff reported the following benefits

- Increased engagement in school and education projects.
- Significantly improved family relationships.
- Increased self esteem and self worth.
- Increased awareness of alcohol facts and safer drinking limits.
- More able to articulate own risk management and make informed choices about drinking.

Uturn delivered alcohol training to 260 locality workers. Additionally 150 locality staff visited the Uturn project and had specific contact with the Alcohol Champion.

The staff reported the following benefits:

- Better awareness and understanding of available services and support and relevant referral processes.
- More appropriate delivery of services particularly early interventions.
- More appropriate referrals to Uturn.
- Workers report that they are more able to ask for advice and guidance as a result of relationships facilitated by the Alcohol Champion.

Parents who received support reported that they had gained:

- An increased understanding of alcohol and potential risks.
- A clearer understanding of their son/daughter's experience of alcohol and treatment.
- A trusted point of contact and an empathic support network.

● Key successes

- The profile of the Uturn service has been significantly improved.
- Significantly more young people are accessing the specialist alcohol service.
- More young women with alcohol related issues are being referred to Uturn.
- Staff knowledge and confidence has increased.

● Key learning

- The importance of quality relationships in improving participation in multi agency working.
- Young people's drug and alcohol agencies are well placed to focus on supporting youth workers to deliver appropriate alcohol interventions.
- Consistent alcohol awareness and service

information training packages are key to good service provision and positive outcomes.

- Early identification of appropriate referral pathways is useful in engaging new partners and improving services for young people.
- An identified 'champion' role can provide enhanced value to other services and locality teams.

Case Study

The project prioritised providing training and learning opportunities to as many staff as possible within locality teams and other relevant local services. To facilitate this, Uturn adopted a range of approaches to engaging with staff teams including a programme of planned visits and 'floor walking' and question and answer sessions. The aim of this was to provide information relating to local alcohol statistics, promote their service and referral processes and share ideas and tools regarding effective engagement with young people.

More targeted engagement was undertaken with specific teams. For example a half day event was held with the local Youth Offending Team which delivered further alcohol awareness training and supported relationship building across the organisations. Staff used individual case studies to consider how services can best work together to meet the young people's needs.

As a result there has been a significant increase in communication between the organisations and an overall increase in the number of referrals to Uturn and successful engagement of young people with alcohol related issues.

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ASH - Alcohol and Sexual Health Project

Bath

Project 28 is a drug and alcohol treatment service working with young people up to the age of 19 who are resident within the Bath and North East Somerset area. It is an open access service providing drug and alcohol information and advice, outreach, specialist and prescribed treatment, counselling, alternative therapies, diversionary activities, education, employment and training opportunities and training to partner agencies.

● The Approach

The overall aim of the ASH project was to reduce the alcohol related risks among young people aged 13 to 19 years, particularly those accessing sexual health advice and treatment.

The project aimed to reduce alcohol misuse, address sexual health risks and improve skills and practice among health professionals. The project specifically targeted young people who were binge drinking but unlikely to view their alcohol use as a significant problem or to access alcohol services.

● More specific aims were identified as:

- Increasing awareness among young people and health professionals of the risks and consequences of alcohol use and unprotected sexual activity.
- Building capacity for support through the NHS by providing health workers with relevant skills and knowledge to discuss alcohol issues.
- Providing alcohol brief interventions at 'teachable moments' particularly when accessing sexual health services.
- Developing a bespoke young persons Identification and Brief Advice (IBA) tool and training.
- Developing referral pathways for brief interventions and longer-term support options.
- Developing age appropriate information and education materials, with young people inputting into their design.

Initially the core approach of the project was to establish a specific post to deliver alcohol IBA interventions to young people. Following early engagement with a wide range of services and staff this focus shifted. The distinct approach of the project became the development of a specific young person's alcohol brief intervention 'tool' - DrinkThink - and providing relevant staff training and support to use this new resource.

In terms of evaluation, use of the screening and intervention tools across the different agencies are monitored and collated monthly. The DrinkThink tool has an evaluation and feedback form that encourages young people to rate it's approval and indicate their anticipated change in thinking and behaviour.

● Learning

The project was successful in developing an innovative new resource to support the delivery of young people's alcohol identification and brief advice. The new tool – DrinkThink - and associated resources were developed with input from young people. Together with training for relevant agencies this has facilitated increased capacity for alcohol IBA across the area.

● Indications of success

To date more than 45 health professionals have been trained to deliver the DrinkThink IBA intervention to young people in sexual health settings.

Between February 2010 and March 2011 141 young people were screened for harmful alcohol use. Of those 86 received an alcohol brief intervention and age appropriate information on alcohol units, risk and harm minimisation advice and, where appropriate, information regarding referral for further support in the future.

32 referrals were made to specialist alcohol treatment at Project 28 and of these 27 young people engaged in structured treatment. 56 young people with negative screenings received general advice and information on alcohol and sexual health.

Over 50 other professionals working within Project 28 and other young people's services have adopted the DrinkThink tools as part of their approach in addressing alcohol within drug treatment interventions.

Awareness-raising activities and alcohol education have increased across the area particularly in schools and youth services. Alcohol was the subject for a poster design competition across secondary schools, and young people attending youth services have been offered additional activities on alcohol and sexual health awareness. This was facilitated through having the local schools drug and alcohol education adviser on the ASH project board.

● Key successes

- The development of a unique package of tools to deliver age appropriate alcohol screening and brief interventions to young people.
- The adoption of the DrinkThink IBA tools by health professionals working across services in Bath and North East Somerset.
- The adoption of the intervention within a broader group of professionals such as Youth Offending Team, Social Services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- The engagement of relevant partners in a steering group committed to the development and implementation of alcohol interventions, pathways and the DrinkThink tool.
- The participation of young people in the design of the brief intervention and positive feedback at evaluation (8.6/10 approval rating).

- Identifying young people using sexual health advice services as a group at increased risk of harm through alcohol misuse.
- The delivery of alcohol brief interventions to 86 young people, many of whom would not have accessed support from existing services.

● Key learning

- Young people find it easier to count alcohol units through bottle measures rather than standard glass measurements.
- Health messages most relevant to young people are those identifying the physically visible effects of alcohol such as calorie content and the effects on skin and eyes.
- A bright, visual design and content in alcohol IBA tools and resources are most likely to engage young people.
- Pilot projects can provide the flexibility to evolve in response to early learning from a range of stakeholders.
- Services will often require ongoing support to continue delivering brief interventions.

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Case Study

Melissa, aged 15, was identified as high risk of harm by the school nursing team. Using the DrinkThink IBA screening tool she was assessed as drinking 70 plus units of alcohol a week. Melissa was binge drinking with friends on a Friday and Saturday night and drinking alone during the week. She was unaware of the risks associated with her alcohol use but did recognise that she drank more than her friends.

Melissa received the DrinkThink IBA intervention through Project 28 and two one-to-one sessions with the alcohol worker. Her drinking has now lowered substantially to an average of 5 units a week. Harm reduction information such as eating before going out, pacing drinks and having regular water or soft drinks whilst drinking has helped Melissa to reduce her intake and stay in control. Melissa has also accessed sexual health services through using the ASH programme and receives ongoing support to maintain the changes she has made.

Melissa writes of her experience:
“Before I met the workers from project 28 I was drinking an unbelievable amount. Half the time I could not remember the night before. It wasn't just weekends but school days too. My worker at Project 28 helped me to discover what really matters. She helped me realise that things would be better if I changed. It was hard at first but the support really helped.”

Youth Alcohol Arrest Referral Service (YAARS)

Gloucestershire

The YAARS project focuses on engaging with young people in the police custody suite. It is not unusual for a young person to arrive in a custody suite; however providing direct youth orientated support before a court appearance is. Identifying this specific group of young people and targeting this particular aspect of offending through established routes provides a contemporary response to an old issue.

● The Approach

The YAARS project is directed at young people under 18 years of age who have been arrested where alcohol is a significant factor in the offence.

The primary aim of YAARS was to support a reduction of problematic drinking and associated offending in young people. The Gloucestershire Youth Offending Service provided an Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme for young people based on the best practice of Adult Arrest Referral Schemes.

● The project delivered:

- Alcohol related assessments and interventions for under 18's who have been arrested. Interventions included Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Solution Focussed Therapy.
- Direct referrals to occupational, emotional and mental well being services.
- Alcohol education and awareness sessions that focussed on the effects of alcohol on health and personal safety.

During the initial stages the project was evaluated through feedback from the young people at the time of the intervention and some telephone follow up a few months later. Due to budget and staffing constraints it was not possible to maintain this but activity monitoring and analysis were undertaken as standard.

● Learning

Establishing the YAARS project onto an existing Arrest Referral Scheme saved a great deal of 'start-up' protocol and planning. Using the substance misuse workers based with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) provided a number of benefits, most notably facilitating a consistent approach for the young person

through the Criminal Justice System. Information and assessments were held within the YOS secure database and thereby directly informed sentencing decisions.

● **Indications of Success**

From April 2009 to March 2011 114 young people were referred to the YAARS. 77 per cent of those referrals were young men and 33 per cent young women. There were some indications that the young women presented with more complex issues and required referral to a broader range of services. The majority of the referrals were 16 and 17 years of age and the youngest referral was 13 years old.

Of the 114 referrals 70 received a specialist assessment and intervention. 20 young people were referred to specialist alcohol services for more structured support. Several young people were also referred to a local Youth Housing Advice service and to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

● **Key successes**

- Establishing a new effective referral process.
- Engaging with 114 young people.
- Inter-agency working and referring a number of young people to other services.
- The flexibility of the service to respond to young people's needs.

● **Key learning**

- To ensure credibility of the scheme adequate time must be given to establish relationships between staff teams.
- Effective engagement of all police custody officers is key to ensuring active signposting and referrals.
- Young women arrested within the scheme appeared to have a more complex range of issues than young men in the same cohort.
- Using learning from existing adult Arrest Referral Schemes provided distinct efficiencies regarding planning and protocols.

As a result of the learning from this scheme and a restructuring of the integrated Youth Support Services in Gloucestershire the YAARS is being redefined. In future the service will adopt a more targeted approach to engaging with young people and allocating resources. This will include:

- Using police intelligence to identify hotspot areas where there are known issues around young people and alcohol.
- Allocating appropriate resources including Substance Misuse staff and detached Youth Work Practitioners to target young people in these areas.
- Establishing new links to schools, colleges and training providers that the identified young people attend to extend alcohol awareness and education opportunities.
- Key learning from the scheme is being used to support the roll out of Gloucestershire's Pathfinder Diversion Scheme.

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Case Study

In April 2010 a 17 year old male was referred to YAARS. Due to his chaotic lifestyle he missed appointments offered through the YAARS and was sentenced to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. As a result of his non-compliance his Case Responsible Officer urgently referred him to the Substance Misuse Worker.

On assessment he was found to have an AUDIT score of 39 – indicating alcohol dependency. Staff contacted the young man's General Practitioner and subsequent liver function tests diagnosed an enlarged liver. He had been found unconscious and taken to the local hospital Emergency Department six times over a four month period.

Multi-agency working was initiated and hospital Emergency Departments across the county and local Police Custody suites informed of the young man and his health.

The young man is still engaged in treatment and has maintained contact with the Youth Offending Service, Substance Misuse Worker and health services.

He has achieved a reduction of alcohol intake from 50 plus units per day to 15 units a day through controlled drinking, leading to a significant reduction of offending and no further visits to hospital Emergency Department.

Locality Support Project

Plymouth

The Plymouth Locality Project focused on building capacity and capability of partnership working to address alcohol related need among young people in defined areas of the city. The project took a community development approach to raising awareness, building capacity, improving pathways and bridging the gap between universal and specialist interventions.

The project was delivered through a unique partnership between three key organisations within the identified localities. The Harbour Young People's Specialist Substance Misuse Service, Budshead Trust Youth Alcohol Project and Hamaoze House.

● The Approach

The overall aim of the project was to improve responses for young people with alcohol related needs living in the two localities of Plymouth with the highest recorded levels of substance misuse. The project set out to ensure that young people have local access to seamless targeted and specialist support.

The Harbour Project provided support, consultation, training and advice to the other partners in this project. They also led on work to develop pathways with the hospital Emergency Department and the Criminal Justice System.

● The project delivered

- A range of interventions covering information and advice through to harm reduction and brief interventions focusing on the individuals own alcohol use.
- Capacity building in localities through training.
- Badging of services to show that they provide alcohol support to young people once staff had completed the training.

The project was evaluated through regular contract monitoring and project management review meetings.

● Learning

Realistic timescales need to be set when developing new service models and approaches. Within the context of general capacity and capability building, consideration should be given to facilitating constructive relationships and partnerships. Partners involved in this project needed time to learn about each other, build trust and through this clarify roles and functions.

The innovative approach of the Young People's Specialist Treatment Service partnering locality based services was key to success. The specialist service provided significant input into developing the competence of both Budshead Trust and Hamoaze House to deliver targeted substance misuse interventions using brief interventions and harm reduction approaches.

The credibility of local providers among young people was a key building block to improving access to a range of alcohol support.

The project saw 63 young people aged 14 years and under demonstrating its accessibility to young adolescents and indicating the opportunity for delivering interventions at an early age.

● **Indications of Success**

From October 2009 until January 2011 168 young people between the ages of 11 and 18 years old received an alcohol intervention at Budshead Trust and Hamoaze House. The majority of those young people were aged 14, 15 and 16 years old. A significant number of young people self-referred to the services indicating accessibility of the services and confidence in the providers.

The majority of interventions were for alcohol information and awareness and brief interventions.

Building capacity for responding to young people's alcohol related needs through workforce development was a key feature of this project. To date the following staff received training as part of this project

- 2 staff from Budshead and 1 from Hamoaze House.
- 10 staff from locality based youth services.
- 7 staff from locality based education welfare services.

The training covered a number of topics including alcohol effects, risks and protective factors, Drug Use Screening Tool (DUST), alcohol brief interventions, adolescent development and drug interactions.

As a result of the project further capacity within locality teams has been developed through a complimentary training programme commissioned by the Young Peoples Substance Misuse Commissioning Group. This focuses on effective approaches to recognising and responding to substance misuse among young people.

The project established a 'service recognition scheme'. Once staff had completed training a 'Young People's Locality Alcohol Network' logo was displayed at their service. This indicates to young people that alcohol information, advice and support is available at that site.

● **Key successes**

- Increased capacity and capability within local areas to meet alcohol related needs.
- Improved access to a range of support for young people with alcohol related needs – many of whom had not previously used services.
- Enhanced partnerships between specialist treatment service and locality based providers.

● **Key learning**

- Developing community capacity to meet need is not a quick fix – it takes time.
- Services identified as 'alcohol' rather than 'alcohol and drugs' maybe more attractive and accessible to young people who see themselves as 'drinkers' not drug users.
- Building the capacity of locality services that have credibility with young people can contribute towards increasing the number of young people accessing support and can provide the opportunities to intervene early.
- Building capacity through workforce development within locality based services is an important element in increasing access to support.



Case Study

15 year old male was referred to one of the targeted alcohol services in the project. He was drinking 1 litre of cider every weekend with friends. Attendance at school was poor and his parents had received a visit from the Education Welfare Officer with the risk of enforcement action being taken. Following initial assessment a plan was agreed where an extended brief intervention approach was used to explore drinking behaviours and identify opportunities for change. Following this intervention the young person reported a reduction in his drinking, his attendance at school improved and staff noted a general improvement in his wellbeing. He was referred to a youth centre that supported him in engaging with positive activities .

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Alcohol Concern and South West Alcohol Improvement Programme – Toolkit for Vulnerable Young People

This project developed a toolkit and training resources for a range of professionals and carers to provide guidance on delivering responses to support young people who are experiencing, or at risk of, alcohol related harm. The project had a particular focus on the vulnerable groups of looked after young people and those with special educational needs.

The project was delivered through a partnership between the South West Alcohol Improvement Programme and Alcohol Concern. It builds on relevant policy, research and guidance and is informed by consultation with a number of professionals and young people from across the South West and in particular from Torbay. In this way the project set out to test and evaluate new thinking and develop fresh approaches to current practice.

● The Approach

There are strong links between alcohol consumption among young people and a number of risk factors including offending, teenage pregnancy, truancy, exclusion and illegal drug misuse. Between April 2006 and March 2009 2,213 people under 18 were admitted to hospital in the South West as a direct result of alcohol use. It is estimated that between 630 and 1,260 child protection cases in the South West each year involve alcohol.

This project aimed to improve understanding of these issues for particularly vulnerable young people and to provide opportunities for commissioners, Service Managers and range of Tier 1 professionals and young people's carers to build confidence and skills in responding to alcohol related issues.

● The project identified the following aims:

- To encourage development of the evidence base and sharing of experience and promising practice.
- To stimulate innovative and 'young people' friendly practice in both rural and urban areas and in a range of settings e.g. schools, children's social care services and young offenders institutions.
- To develop an accessible toolkit resource through engagement with young people, carers and parents, commissioners and providers of relevant services for vulnerable young people.
- To deliver a series of training events across the South West region.
- To develop and test an exemplar alcohol treatment pathway for vulnerable young people.

The project was guided by a Steering Group and expert advisors contributed to various aspects of the toolkit. All attendees at the training sessions provided evaluation feedback.



● Learning

The partnership between Alcohol Concern and the South West Alcohol Improvement Programme provided real benefits to this project. Alcohol Concern has a national remit and as such has an overview of current evidence and good practice that was invaluable in informing this work.

The nine training sessions were over-subscribed – this may in part have been due to the fact that there was no charge and they were held in accessible locations. The popularity of the sessions and feedback from delegates indicated the importance of the issue and the need for workforce development in this area.

Feedback suggested that delegates were specifically interested in developing approaches to working with young people who are particularly difficult to engage and not expressing a desire to change. It also indicated the need to develop more comprehensive policies and approaches to working with young people who are intoxicated at the point of access.

One of the most positive features of the training sessions was the interagency liaison that was fostered as a result of attendance. There is clearly scope for more multi-disciplinary work and this has the potential to further improve responses for young people.

At some of the training events it was specifically noted that police community support officers were encouraging staff working with young people to talk to them about particularly vulnerable young people so that they could 'look out for them' and provide additional support in community settings. This particular area of enhanced partnership working is an area that could be further developed in the future.

● Indications of success

The published toolkit provides a number of recommendations for improving responses and practice and includes a number of tools and a sample alcohol treatment pathway. To date 646 toolkits have been distributed, mainly within the South West. Additionally the toolkit is available to download from a number of websites including the Alcohol Learning Centre and Alcohol Concern.

The training package was designed to support use of the approaches and techniques in the toolkit. To date 190 non alcohol specialist workers who are in contact with vulnerable young people have attended training sessions across the South West.

The training package continues to be available for commission through Alcohol Concern's training department.

● Key successes

- Engaging with a wide range of professionals and young people.
- Production of sustainable resources – the toolkit and training package.
- Good take up and evaluation of the training sessions.

● Key learning

- There is a lack of research and evidence into links between special educational needs and risk of alcohol related harm.
- Further development work is required to improve care pathways for vulnerable young people who find it difficult to engage with services.
- A wide range of staff indicated a need for specific guidance on how to safely and effectively manage intoxicated young people.



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Gloucestershire
youth offending services



Alcohol Concern
Making Sense of Alcohol

**CALLING
TIME**
South West
on alcohol related harm