

Methodology

The Strategy Unit has undertaken its work in the following stages:

- planning and scoping the project, and identifying key stakeholders;
- fact-finding based on key workstreams;
- consulting with stakeholders, through a joint Strategy Unit/ Department of Health consultation document and at consultation events in London, Bristol, Newcastle and Manchester; and
- publishing an Interim Analytical Report synthesising analysis and comparative evidence on the harms associated with alcohol misuse and the effectiveness of measures to address them, which was supported by a paper on the costs of alcohol misuse in England.

The final phase of the project is currently in progress and will conclude with the publication of a report setting out the cross-governmental alcohol harm reduction strategy for England, in time for implementation in 2004.

Planning and scoping the project

A small scoping team was assembled in Spring 2002. The team:

- produced a Scoping Note establishing the key workstreams upon which the project would focus;
- identified key stakeholders;
- set up an Advisory Group for guidance (see separate note); and
- developed a Project Management Plan.

Fact-finding based on key workstreams

The analysis phase of the project was structured around four main workstreams:

- health;
- crime and environment;
- the costs of alcohol-related harm; and
- the supply-side.

These workstreams provided a focus for gathering information and consulting relevant stakeholders. Research for each workstream was carried out in a variety of ways, including extensive discussions with stakeholders, site visits, formal and informal consultation with the project advisory group, attendance of seminars and workshops and the commissioning of new research.

The consultation process

The project's formal consultation process consisted of two phases. The first took the form of a joint Strategy Unit/ Department of Health consultation document published on 15 October 2002. This was followed-up by a joint consultation event on 22 October 2002 in London and similar joint events in Newcastle, Bristol and Manchester in November 2002.

The findings of both phases fed directly into the project's interim analytical report, and have played a key role in shaping its policy objectives. A summary of the themes from the consultation and copies of consultation response are published on the website.

Producing an analysis report

An Interim Analytical Report was produced to pull together findings from the key workstreams and to establish the strengths and weaknesses of existing policy aimed at addressing alcohol-related harm.

The report provided a comprehensive and rigorous synthesis of existing research on: the harms associated with alcohol misuse, the range of factors influencing drinking behaviour and the range of interventions delivered to address harm. The report was published on the Strategy Unit's website in September 2002.

Formulating policy conclusions

The conclusions drawn in the Interim Analytical Report will be used to shape the vision of the final report and to outline a series of objectives to inform the development of the strategy.