

# **National Harm Reduction Strategy Consultation Document**

## **Cultural & Behavioural issues**

6.

Alcohol misuse can range from binge drinking to dependent drinking. Several different factors need to be taken into account including harm to health, to mental health, to relationships, education or work, and harm to finances.

7.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy should seek to educate so that the individual can undertake change. Once a greater understanding of the substance is achieved, if an individual recognises that a change needs to occur they will have the means to do so. However there also needs to be sufficient help provided for those who need support to change behaviour or further medical help.

13.

With young people, perceptions of risk do affect behaviour, but only if they can recognise risks. Young people need to have help in recognising risks, particularly around drug and alcohol use. The only risk that is often recognised is the risk to health.

## **Crime, Disorder and anti-social behaviour**

30.

Although young people have been targeted for anti crime and anti-social behaviour initiatives, young people are also the overwhelming targets for crime (particularly street crime). Young people need to be and feel involved in the process of talking crime.

Also, anti social behaviour and crime around alcohol use appears to be more associated with adults at closing time (definitely in the local area of Richmond and Twickenham).

## **Education**

41.

The majority of adults in the country drink alcohol; yet know surprisingly little about it. Education needs to start early and in school. The presumption is that alcohol is relatively safe because it is so socially acceptable. There is a huge need for raising awareness around alcohol use including facts about what alcohol is, how it affects the body, and equally important, if not more so is appropriate harm reduction education at key stages in a young person's life.

Behaviour cannot be changed through one off lessons on the subject of alcohol. The subject needs to be addressed at specific times throughout school life. A recent pilot project in alcohol workshops for year nine pupils showed that a brief intervention (2 sessions) including information about units, alcohol strengths, recognising risks and first aid around alcohol use, increased the pupils knowledge greatly but more significantly modified the behaviour of those young people who were drinking regularly.

42.

The full evaluation of the above project is currently in printing, a pdf copy of the findings is attached.

Measuring how successful any educational project is can be difficult, particularly if the marker is 'behaviour changed'. However it is relatively simple to gather how much new information has been learned. Even if information had been gained, it is no guarantee that the pupils will use that information to change their behaviour or if it is used that they can recognise what triggered that change.

43.

'Sensible drinking' is not appealing to the audience that is most in need of it. However, approaching the subject from a Harm Reduction point of view does appear to carry more weight. There is a desire for relevant information but the message that is often given bears no significance to young peoples lives.

46.

All education institutions have a responsibility to provide education and support for its pupils. Alcohol education has to be an integral part of the school curriculum both in science and PSHE. The subject should not be considered to have been covered sufficiently if only a few sessions are dedicated to alcohol. The subject needs to be visited at several stages and should be relevant to the pupils development.

49.

Over the past years it seems that alcohol education had played second fiddle to illegal drug education in schools. However this means that drug education has progressed greatly whereas alcohol education has stagnated on the whole.

Alcohol education needs to be as innovative as drug education, and overall needs to be relevant to the young people. It is no use telling people how they should drink (i.e. reducing amounts, sticking within certain units etc), rather taking the drug harm reduction approach of developing understanding of the substance and ways to remain safer while using it.

50.

Alcohol advertising is self regulated; the guidelines are sufficient but they are rarely adhered to.

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