

RESPONSE TO ALCOHOL STRATEGY DOCUMENT
QUESTIONS 41- 51
CHRIS WARD 8.1.03

THIS RESPONSE IS A SUPPLEMENT TO DUDLEY PCT AND MIDLANDS ALCOHOL FORUM SUBMISSIONS AND REFERS SPECIFICALLY TO QUESTIONS 41 – 51: EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION.

PLEASE REFER TO:

www.glug-alcohol-education.co.uk

As a preventive Alcohol and Drugs Education Specialist who has worked with all major Midlands Health Education Agencies, (and who was recently asked to become Education Development Officer for a major International Drinks Company), CHRIS WARD continues to work in the front line of school and community alcohol education.

Education and communication

41.

What should be the objectives in this area? Is the aim to raise levels of awareness? Is it to inform more specifically? Is it to change behaviour? Are there any particularly successful or unsuccessful examples we should be aware of?

41.1 Objectives should include:

- delivery of ongoing programmes in the primary school
- raising levels of awareness,
- informing specifically on the risk equations associated with inappropriate alcohol consumption
- laying the foundation for potential behaviour modification based upon individual empowerment, leading to self-efficacy and further skills acquisition.

These educative processes must begin at a young age, with appropriate specialist programmes designed to deliver effectively to different age groups, e.g. ages 7 –11 and 11-13, older teenagers, students, and to support teachers and parents.

41.2 **A particularly successful example is the “GLUG” Project.** DSPCT led a cross-agency group to enable the development of this multi-media Preventive Alcohol Education Programme. Researched, devised and delivered by a Specialist Life-Skills Educator to target 7-11 year olds, their teachers, parents, school governors and outside agencies.

“GLUG” stages high-profile in-school events, for large numbers of children, which skill teachers and parents in up-to-date preventive techniques. **This is supported by the multi-media “GLUG” Workpack for revisitable use, as well as a dedicated website:**

www.glug-alcohol-education.co.uk

41.3

To date the 'GLUG' project has targeted 25,000 children and 2,000 teachers in the Dudley borough and has been 'sold through' to five other authorities to reach similar numbers.

The "GLUG" Project was informed by the most up-to-date research available (Coggans and McKellar...Edinburgh University) and the approach extrapolated from their findings on the Healthy School (whole school) approach to Health Issues.

"GLUG" is now recognised as Best Practice by:

Alcohol Concern/Drugscope Education and Prevention Team,
Dudley LEA,

Wolverhampton LEA Children's Services,

Walsall LEA Health & Regeneration,

NW Surrey LEA Health Education,

I.O.Wight LEA Health Education,

Bolton PCT Health Promotion,

West Midlands Police

42.

Given clear objectives what is the evidence on the effectiveness of these approaches? What do they actually achieve? How can their effectiveness be measured?

42.1

Criteria, which need to be assessed, include identifiable outcomes:

- knowledge
- attitude
- emotional literacy
- awareness of behaviours
- skills development

Ongoing evaluation of the "GLUG" Alcohol Education Project by teachers and Health Education Advisors in Dudley reports a high degree of effectiveness in children's access and retention of significant 'personalised/internalised' information on Alcohol and Drugs. Also noted are increased confidence in-group discussion of life-skills issues, both at Primary and early Secondary level.

Lifestyle surveys in Dudley show positive indicators of a lower gradient of pre- and early-teen drinking in contrast to the national trend of a marked acceleration in alcohol consumption amongst these groups.

Such Preventive Education initiatives achieve increased awareness of Alcohol Fact and associated Risk Equations involved in inappropriate (too-early) alcohol experimentation.

Further achieved is the establishment of an early platform of empowerment and linkage to Personal Safety, Community Safety and Citizenship.

42.2

Effectiveness can be measured by locally relevant bodies:

- Teacher Evaluation
- Parental Evaluation
- Independent Monitoring by relevant local / regional agencies including DSPCT, LEA, Children's Services, Alcohol Support Services, WMP, DMBC.
- Health Education Advisors
- Life Style Survey
- Children's Evaluation
- Independent University Evaluation (requires more resources)

No one model of evaluation can be expected to generate satisfactory response to all outcome criteria.

43

How well is the sensible drinking message reaching its audience? Is it sufficiently clear? What is the evidence on penetration and behaviour?

Sensible drinking message would appear not to have great penetration in view of national trends toward higher consumption.

Sensible drinking message appears not to connect with under-age drinkers.

44

How well is scientific research feeding into alcohol education? Is the message based on sound unbiased and uncontroversial research and are new findings effectively incorporated?

Scientific research is a valuable tool. Dudley Lifestyle surveys and "GLUG" project would not be possible without the work of Exeter and Edinburgh Universities. Note the example of the value of work by John Balding and Coggans and McKellar in informing and underpinning the rationale behind the "GLUG" project.

However, such research has to be actively sought and translated into proactive measures, which are relevant to the target group. For this, specialist media skills are required. Education Programmes, which are evolutionary, will update focus and content to incorporate relevant findings.

45

Should particular groups be targeted for information and communications? Is there a need to provide more intensive alcohol education to groups other than young people (eg elderly drinkers)?

A whole population strategy, which begins in the Primary school, should seek to develop separate information and education packages, which target different age ranges. These should not be constantly on view, should be evolutionary and should reflect local initiative as a response to identified need.

46

What is the role of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions in providing alcohol education as well as support for alcohol related problems? How can we best establish and preserve a healthy learning environment?

Schools are in the front line of Preventive Education, but need more support in resources and specialist educators.

Alcohol Education, as part of a Healthy School - Life Skills Approach (whole school /institution) is proving to yield dynamic benefits in the Dudley Borough. Teachers must be encouraged to divest themselves of preconceived ideas on alcohol and embrace a more effective risk recognition, personal safety and empowerment approach within the PSE framework, using appropriate language to access children's micro-cultural codes.

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What role is there for families/parents as role models in educating their children on sensible levels of alcohol drinking and the risks of alcohol misuse? How can they best be informed and engaged in this effort?

Great care is required not to stigmatise families or ethnic groups.

Any form of 'lecturing' will have nil effect.

The open invitation to parents to attend high profile, Alcohol Education events in their own child's school has been welcomed by teachers and parents in Dudley as a good way of 'learning together'. Home/ school materials are useful but need to be fun, entertaining, relevant and informative.

48

What does experience show on the most effective means of getting messages across? Are there circumstances in which the Government is particularly well placed to do so, or conversely might be particularly unsuccessful?

Experience tends to show more accurately how not to get messages across.

It is admitted that Alcohol 'message-campaigns' achieve little or nothing.

A strong argument can be made for moving to sharper, 'hipper', 'cooler', presentation of Alcohol fact, with a language and style, which is relevant to and recognised by the target audience.

Reverse psychology techniques, humour, a real sense of fun and excitement, a sense of the 'streetwise', are too often missing in the programmes, presentations and resources available, both to the general public in all its multi- and micro-cultural diversity, and to Life Skills Educators.

These techniques have been incorporated into the "GLUG" approach, to measurable effect, across a range of parameters, from knowledge retention to improved self-confidence and articulacy, to factual awareness.

The target communities must be able to internalise and personalise for such initiatives to be effective.

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What can be learnt from educational initiatives in the field of illegal drugs?

The multi-issue approach, which enables drug topics to be viewed in the round, has great potential for Alcohol Education. Since alcohol is a drug of tolerance, and its effect is psychoactive, it can be clearly identified as a substance whose use is deserving of respect. The problems associated with illegal drug use (low self esteem, social deprivation, peer influence etc.) are often paralleled in and complicated by alcohol misuse.

The "GLUG" Alcohol Education Project, for example, built upon an already successful approach to Smoking and to Solvent (Volatile Substance) misuse in its style and issues analysis.

51

Do you have thoughts on the likely evolution of the alcohol industry over the next decade?

Alcohol Industry is likely to seek to position itself to appear as a partner to government in the formulation of alcohol-related strategy. It no doubt sees both threats and opportunities in the public policy environment. **It will seek not only to respond but to actively shape that environment.**

This may be through the appointment of its own education advisors with a remit to influence policymakers' decisions.

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