

- (1) by virtue of them serving as District/Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillor Jose Compton – Warwick District Council
Councillor Mike Perry – Stratford on Avon District Council
Councillor John Ross – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Heather Timms – Rugby Borough Council

3. Presentation – Evidence Gathering for Young People and Alcohol

Michael Maguire, Head of Service – Positive About Young People (PAYP)

Michael Maguire gave a presentation on the work of PAYP, which is a partnership between Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Police aiming to prevent disaffection amongst young people aged 5 – 13 years in Warwickshire and to remedy it where it occurs. He noted the following points:

1. There was a problem in terms of delivering services while there was no combined way of putting together evidence to determine the extent of the problem.
2. The service aimed to reduce youth crime and offending, school exclusions, unauthorised absence and young people going into care through a combined approach that was group, neighbourhood and family led, taking into account young peoples' views on alcohol.
3. Of the 230 families the Youth Inclusion Support Panel had worked with in 2006/7, it was estimated that 25% of these had problems with drinking.
4. Of the 50 families identified in the 13 Plus Project in Nuneaton and Bedworth as requiring particular attention to divert young people from anti-social behaviour, it was estimated that 80% had difficulties with alcohol.
5. 175 families had been referred for mentoring, of which 50% had difficulties with alcohol.
6. There were 31 PODS (Positive Operational Drop-In Strategy) carrying out group work across the County involving 43 sessions of up to 40 young people per week. The majority of these young people had had limited difficulties with alcohol from time to time.
7. The Partners Holiday Activity Programme had achieved the targeted number with 44,416 contacts, keeping young people busy and involved. A significant number of parents and members of the community consulted felt that the programme had made a difference to the community and had a positive impact.
8. 22 Chips and Sports programmes had taken place over the year involving 220 sessions of free fun and sporting activities.
9. Young people did understand the issues and difficulties caused by misuse of alcohol and what they were engaging in.

Dave Fraser, Operations Manager, Connexions

Dave Fraser stated that it was not a requirement for Connexions to record any data about alcohol use or misuse except for those cases referred on to other agencies and that this was not a target for Connexions. Efforts were being made to enable the data system to collect quality data and allow decisions to be made on the best evidence available. He added that his presentation included anecdotal and individual examples to add to the bigger factual picture Members were receiving and made the following points:

- i. There was a need to determine a definition of use or misuse of alcohol and what was considered a problem.
- ii. Age Concern reported that there were 1.5m families with young people in the UK where there were alcohol problems.
- iii. The knock-on effects of alcohol misuse on families, relationships, health and education needed to be noted.
- iv. The UK had a culture of accepting alcohol and many young people drank at home with their parents or were bought alcohol by their parents.
- v. All schools had programmes covering issues such as drug and alcohol misuse and sexual health and young people were aware of the dangers, but peer pressure and the power of advertising were both constant.
- vi. There were health and safety issues attached to young people getting drunk and placing themselves in vulnerable situations often involving fights, muggings, unprotected and underage sex, health issues, undesirable adults and being taken to Casualty.
- vii. The acceptance of drinking was highlighted on YouTube, where there were 159 video entries on underage drinking.
- viii. Connexions were able to and always tried to engage with parents and where parents did become involved there were usually positive results.

Vicki Barnes, Team Leader (Interventions) – Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Vicki Barnes outlined the national context in terms of alcohol misuse including the following:

- in 2006 in England 5.9m adults were drinking to get drunk
- 48% of men and 39% of women were drinking above the recommended levels of consumption
- 10% of 12-15 year-olds were drinking at least once a week
- 16% of 16-17 year-olds were drinking at least once a week
- 10% of 12-15 year-olds were buying their own alcohol.

She added:

- a. At the end of 2006 the Youth Justice Board received a Top 3 score for Effective Practice Quality Assurance as a Best Practice area working with substance abuse.

- b. The service used the “Asset” data collection system, which allowed recording of all areas to do with young offenders including accommodation, family, education, employment and substance misuse.
- c. All young offenders were assessed initially, followed by a review and reassessment every three months.
- d. In 2005/06 138 10-17 year-olds were recorded by the substance misuse service, of which alcohol (134) and cannabis (114) were the main drugs of choice and received Tier 2 assessments with the level of intervention more targeted with a focus on counselling.
- e. The service carried out Health Promotion through:
 - reparation
 - Motor projects (highlighting the dangers of substance misuse and driving)
 - Fire Prevention (together with the Community Safety Directorate)
 - Keeping safe
 - Group work with parents and young people (working together and in parallel groups looking at issues such as avoiding conflict and dealing with teenagers).
- f. When working with young offenders who were difficult to engage, staff had to use different, creative ways to match individual needs.
- g. There were currently no Parenting Orders in Warwickshire and all work with parents was being done on a voluntary basis and welcomed support.
- h. YOT was piloting a training programme for staff with their own children dealing with the families and communities.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Members requested further information on outcomes of the assessments of young offenders.
2. It was agreed that there needed to be a definition of misuse and better recording of evidence, which was currently not available beyond the youth offending statistics in order to be fully aware of the situation.
3. There was a need for better information and advice around safer drinking as there were currently so many mixed messages for both adults and young people and £800 million spent annually on advertising of alcohol.
4. It was not unusual for young people to drink and historically they were welcome in clubs and pubs and subject to social consciousness. Today they were often pushed away from safe areas and left to their own devices drinking on the street and in open spaces. Young people also often suffered from low self-esteem avoiding confined spaces and sticking to their own.

5. There was evidence to suggest success in most cases where intervention had taken place with both young people and parents.
6. PAYP had an excellent relationship with schools such as the Basics of Success Home Tutoring Project to improve the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and to promote family learning.
7. YOT worked in schools with known young offenders and out of schools to get disengaged young people back into school.
8. Connexions were in every secondary school on a daily basis and had a good relationship with schools and partners.
9. It was agreed that all the services could do more to engage young people and get those on the edge into activities, but there was also a need for all stakeholders to work together to maximise resources and tackle the wide range of issues related to alcohol misuse.
10. Perception in communities was that alcohol misuse and antisocial behaviour was escalating but it was agreed this was difficult to estimate and the perceived reality and tolerance varied from community to community. It was noted that the quality of service for victims of antisocial behaviour had improved.
11. Criminal damage had increased by 8.7% over the past year with targets for reduction not being achieved. This was being taken very seriously by partners and officers from the Community Protection Directorate were scheduled to visit Dorset to look at the Blitz 2005 project which had been organised by a number of partners to educate 14-15 year olds in the Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell areas on the impact of alcohol and is nationally recognised as being successful in this area.
12. Where it was known that alcohol was being sold to underage youths, Police and Trading Standards were contacted for targeted intervention.
13. The availability and cheapness of alcohol made abuse easier for a group who did not usually have a lot of money.
14. It was felt that it would not be possible to take alcohol away from young people completely, but those in difficulty, danger and were vulnerable should be targeted and supported.
15. PAYP worked within communities, often employing people from within the communities, many of which were parents themselves. The work they carried out with their inclusion programme and panels also required parental inclusion and consent.
16. Boredom was an influencing factor for many young people and it was agreed that more activities and facilities should be made available to engage young people.

Dave Fraser summed up by saying there was a need to look innovatively at what was being done and partnership working and education were key to success. He added the need to define use and misuse.

Vicki Barnes noted that young people were aware of the immediate dangers of alcohol abuse but the following areas needed to be looked at:

- the need for better information and advice
- the issue of current availability
- lack of facilities, particularly for 16, 17 and 18 year-olds
- the need to look at individuals first, backed up by statistics.

Michael Maguire added that the Committee should be asked young people what their perspective on alcohol abuse was, what their needs were and what needed to be done.

The Chair thanked the speakers and their support officers for their presentations.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 4.00 p.m.