

Combined Minutes of the Special Meetings of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2007 and 12 June 2007

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Richard Grant
	“ John Ross
	“ Dave Shilton
	“ Mota Singh
	“ Heather Timms
	“ John Wells

Other County Councillors	Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young People & Families)
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Invited Guest	Claire Sangster
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Officers	Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need Division Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer
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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that the document distributed to Members was an aide memoire for the final report of the review on Alcohol and Young People, which needed to be succinct with an emphasis on action points. He added that the evidence, issues and actions points had been collated into the following five areas:

- Information Gathering
- Education
- Parents
- Misconceptions
- Diversionary Activities.

Members then agreed that an extra theme of “Over-Arching Issues” should also be discussed.

Once agreed by the Committee, the final report would be sent to the Cabinet for approval and implementation.

Following broad discussion of the report and evidence gathered, Members agreed the following points:

Information Gathering

1. The need for intelligent use of data to target the right areas as and where needed.
2. It had been obvious from many of the invited guests that records did not include alcohol misuse, and it was agreed that all agencies under Every Child Matters, particularly A&E Units, should be required to record alcohol related data, including the following:

- Police should record related incidents such as driving offences, anti-social behaviour, nuisance youths etc through both neighbourhood units and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
 - Trading Standards on a geographical basis through alcohol purchases and test cases.
 - Schools – where there was evidence of misuse.
 - Social Services – in terms of looked after and vulnerable children.
 - Youth clubs and Youth Workers.
 - Youth Offending Team.
 - CDRPs.
3. Information needed to be collected and collated in a consistent way with separate problems identified and separate from drug use.
 4. There was some discussion around where data should be collated, and one possibility was the Observatory in the Environment and Economy Directorate. Information gathered by different agencies could be reported to a multi-agency Steering Group and needed to be available to the Children, Young People and Families Directorate to help inform policy and direct action.

Education

- The implications to health of alcohol misuse to be included in the curriculum in a more consistent way with more effective educational, social and health messages. This could begin through inclusion in the induction pupils went through when starting secondary school.
- Schools to be encouraged to have greater links with parents about health issues.
- Education needed to be joined up, with a coherent and sustained message being given from all agencies
- The good practice from Lancashire County Council to be considered.
- The impact of alcohol misuse against physical performance with links to organisations such as local football clubs.
- More work to be done with Governors, Heads and Teachers.
- Messages about alcohol misuse to be visible in schools.
- Education of children at a younger age.
- Peers should be used in the education of young people, such as recovering alcoholics.
- Head Teachers and Governors should be given support to achieve the additional role for Schools in tackling alcohol misuse.
- Messages and education delivered needed to have high impact, and there was a role for groups such as Hybrid:Arts who were already examples of good practice.

Parents

- Parental responsibility needed to be reinforced and encouraged.
- A campaign similar to the Lancashire Parents Awareness Campaign would be useful to reach out and remind parents what their responsibilities were and to educate in them in terms of alcohol.
- The County needs to work directly with parents to influence them, consideration should be given to establishing a parents forum.
- Work could be done with Fostering and Adoptive Parents about issues faced and the best messages to give.
- The message needed to be “carrot and stick” with parents having easy access to support services.
- It was acknowledged that different approaches would work with different parents, and hard to reach parents would probably not attend parents evenings.
- Parents were also consumers, consideration should therefore be given to how supermarkets etc could reinforce the message to parents.
- The Committee should support the work being done by the Community Protection O&S Committee on test purchasing.
- There was a need to get information to parents and to stop parents abusing the system.

Misconceptions

- There were misconceptions amongst the youth about the level of drinking which changed their behaviour.
- There was a need to challenge misconceptions, this could be done through:
 - schools
 - youth services
 - agencies such as Hybrid Arts
 - Schools Councils
 - Peer mentors and role models
 - County Youth Panel and Youth Forums
 - Young Parliamentarians
 - Voluntary Organisations such as Scouts and Guides
 - Faith Communities
 - Radio and the media in general
 - Challenge through positive role models (sports stars)
 - Shock tactics (young recovering alcoholic)
- Young People wanted to “be part of the crowd” and the message needed to be changed so it was not “cool” to drink.
- A way of tackling misconceptions about alcohol misuse was through visits to schools with actual evidence, such as young recovering alcoholics.
- The review was not about being against alcohol, but about excessive misuse of alcohol. Misconceptions about the size of the

- problem could be addressed through information being collected and collated in a consistent way.
- The misconceptions about alcohol misuse needed to be addressed so young people were informed about health, attainment, personal safety and sexual health and harm.

Diversionsary Activities

- Young people needed to be consulted to seek their advice and experiences on what trends were and what they would participate in, to ensure actions were appropriate and welcome.
- Outreach Youth Workers were a good source of information as they were engaging with young people.
- There was a need to advertise diversionary activities to inform young people without being prescriptive.
- There was currently not enough resources available in terms of manpower and increased opening hours for youth centres, particularly over weekends. This could be tackled through teams of community volunteers (including parents) led by a trained youth worker.
- Any volunteers working with young people would need to be vetted.
- Diversionary activities to divert behaviour from drinking activities fitted in with the youth work being done by Hugh Disley and his division.
- Young people wanted to spend their free time in activities away from their normal lives, and these often included cinema, ten-pin bowling, playing pool etc. It was noted that the Safer Neighbourhood Panel were carrying out a pilot with Kenilworth Young Club and the CDRP where Friday night trips were organised and funded to activities such as cinema or ten-pin bowling. It was agreed that work needed to be done with private and voluntary organisations to increase the number of opportunities and ensure the activities available were affordable and accessible.

Over-arching Areas

- It was crucial that a co-ordinated, coherent and common message was being given by all agencies.
- Best practice already showing successful results should be considered, such as the programmes carried out by Lancashire County Council.
- Commercial companies such as breweries, licensees, etc had a corporate responsibility to reduce alcohol misuse by young people.
- There was a need to look at whether the prices charged for non-alcoholic drinks could be fairer.
- Work needed to be done with District/Borough Councils in relation to licensing and magistrates.
- The County Council needed to use its position to influence the national debate on issues such as alcohol advertising and parental responsibility.

- A multi-agency group could be in the form of a sub-group of the Warwickshire Children and Young People's Partnership Board, which would give the sub-group the ability to influence other partners.
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Chair