

Alcohol Awareness Report West Lancashire District

Commissioned by:

West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership



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Young People and Drugs

Many young people want to know about drugs and alcohol and for some, this will result in them experimenting for themselves. For the majority this experimentation will be a reasonably safe experience. For others this may lead to a dependency. People use all sorts of substances, both legal and illegal. The illegal substances include cannabis (hash), ecstasy (E), cocaine, heroine and speed (amphetamines).

Many of the legal substances can also be addictive and harmful. These include alcohol, cigarettes, petrol, glue, poppers and aerosols. Society's favourite drugs are alcohol and tobacco, both strongly addictive and misused by millions. Prescribed medicines can also, for some, become addictive.

For young people there are many pressures to become users:

- Peer pressure that if you don't use them you won't fit in.
- Sometimes by taking a particular drug, young people feel more confident and able to deal with difficult situations.
- Drugs may make the young person feel good for a while, so they begin to take drugs more frequently to recreate this 'good' feeling.
- Taking a particular drug may mask feelings of stress, loneliness, or unhappiness.

Becoming addicted

The most common sign that a problem is occurring with drugs especially alcohol, is when the young person no longer feels that their choice of substance is having the effect that they wanted. They soon discover that they have to take more and more of that particular substance to reach the required effect. The next stage is when they can't cope without the drug and they have formed an addiction to it.

Indicators that a young person is addicted

- Thinking about substances every day.
- Never being able to refuse when drugs or alcohol are offered.
- Drinking or taking drugs when alone.
- When taking drugs or alcohol becomes the main focus of a young person's life.

Alcohol: The Drug

Alcohol is the most widely used over the counter drug in the U.K. It is associated with having fun and being sociable. It is reported that by the age of 13, most young people have experimented with the drug. Our own research in West Lancashire verifies this. However for some people it can cost them their health, their homes, their jobs and even their lives.

It is estimated that over 90% of the British population drink alcohol and that over the last decade, the consumption of alcohol consumed by young people has risen dramatically. Young people may be particularly at risk from the effects of alcohol for the following reasons:

- Their bodies are smaller and they are therefore more likely to be affected by smaller amounts of alcohol.
- Their bodies are still developing and the alcohol may disrupt this process.
- Their bodies are not used to alcohol.

Alcohol, technically speaking, is a nervous system depressant, which acts to slow the functions of the body down. It alters the responses of the body in all kinds of ways. Often, it is just enough to make the person feel great, but if too much is consumed, a hangover can result the following day. Alcohol will often exaggerate whatever mood you are in when you start drinking. It is a relaxant so, in moderation, it can reduce feelings of anxiety and inhibitions, making you feel more sociable. It takes your body one hour to process one unit of alcohol.

Alcohol is toxic to the liver. It can also be both psychologically and physically addictive. Alcohol can exacerbate mental health issues and can limit rational thinking skills. This in turn, can decrease inhibitions, leading to increased risk taking behaviour.

Psychologically

Alcohol is a chemical that affects the way the brain can do its job. In the short term, it can cause problems with concentration and memory, irritability and depression. In the long term, it can have more serious consequences. These can include insomnia, mood swings, clinical depression, panic attacks and suicide. In some instances, one person's alcohol use can affect the emotional and psychological well being of other people around them.

Physically

Long term, alcohol use can have devastating effects on the body, and can lead to a number of serious life threatening conditions. Currently there is an increase in the number of young people being admitted to hospital with liver problems, caused by continued alcohol consumption. Young people are more likely to hurt themselves or other people when they have been drinking. Also the short term physical damage that binge drinking can cause, include injuries sustained whilst being drunk, alcohol poisoning and physical withdrawal symptoms.

Alcohol: Its affect on Society

Everyday in the U.K. between 8-14 million workdays are lost due to illness caused by alcohol use. The crime rate shows an annual increase in the number of drink related crimes and accidents both at work, at home and on the roads are more likely to occur when the people involved have been drinking. One fifth of acute hospital admissions, 65% of suicides and 25,000 deaths are attributed to the sociably accepted drug.

Alcohol can affect a person's ability to attend school or work, in some circumstances, costing young people their education or job, often affecting their chances of future employment. Heavy reliance on drink, can sometimes lead to problems with debt, when money needed for general food and drink is being used to purchase alcohol.

In over half the cases of reported domestic violence and child abuse, alcohol plays a strong part. It can lead to disputes and relationship breakdowns between friends or family members.

**Information taken from: http://www.apas.org.uk/alcohol_related_harm.htm*

Alcohol Harm Reduction Campaign: Alcohol know your limits

In mid-October 2006, the Government launched the next phase of the national Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

A hard-hitting advertising campaign, targeted at the 16-24 year old youth ('binge drinkers'), began, to prompt consideration of risks associated with excessive drinking, particularly in relation to their own personal safety.

It was hoped that other 'at risk' groups would also benefit from a renewed focus on alcohol consumption. These groups included pre/pregnant women, and those adults who may unknowingly be drinking at levels that could pose risks to their health.

Professionals working in health, criminal justice, local government, education, the voluntary sector and the drinks industry would be crucial to the success of the campaign and constructive cross-section partnerships would be essential.

Ways in which the Government hoped to launch the campaign

- Leaflets would be distributed to the above mentioned groups.
- Campaign packs containing key facts and messages about sensible drinking, specialist advice and ideas for community-based actions would be sent out to local authorities.
- Regional Alcohol Action Days – forums for professional intermediaries, working in this field to address key issues, develop local solutions and share successful approaches - would take place.
- There would be ways for participants to feed into the campaign in the future.

The Government were keen for those already carrying out activities centred around alcohol or related issues, to consider incorporating the campaign into their existing work. Also they were hoping to encourage people to pass on best practice. Those projects and local campaigns that could be used as future case studies for others to try.

Staying Safe

The Government produced fact sheets. An example of some of their information leaflets can be identified below:

TIPS – HAVE A GREAT NIGHT, AND STAY SAFE

Here are a few ways you can have a great night out without regretting it the next morning.

Eating before drinking: food slows down how fast alcohol gets into your bloodstream. It also gives you more energy and lessens the effects the next day.

Drinking lighter beers: strong continental beers are popular, but can make for a messy night out and a bigger hangover. The difference between a pint of 5% lager and a 3.5% or 4% one is a whole unit.

Set a drinks limit: decide drinks limit in advance and then stick to it.

Have a strategic soft drink or water: try starting off your night with a non-alcoholic drink. It will quench your thirst before you move on to alcohol. Consider alternating between an alcoholic drink and a non-alcoholic drink or at least throw in a non-alcoholic one once in a while, to keep your body hydrated and it will lessen the effects the next day. Drinking water before you go to bed will also help.

Avoid drinking in rounds: this can often mean drinking at a faster pace set by someone else in the group. It may also mean that that you end up drinking more than you intended as you accept people returning your kindness after you have bought them a drink.

Be your own person: you should never feel as though you have to drink something if you don't want to. If you don't feel like another drink or want to drink at your own pace, real friends will respect that.

Keep track of how much you've been drinking: It is hard to say 'That's my limit tonight' if you don't know how much you've had.

Use more mixers: diluting a drink with another mixer will make it last longer and lessen the effects.

Drink smaller drinks: it sounds obvious, but it's better to drink smaller measures of drinks if you have the choice – especially with wine. A large glass of wine in most bars is equivalent to a third of a bottle!

Plan your journey home: don't leave it to chance – think about how you're going to get home and who with, before you go out. Make arrangements before you start drinking and make sure you don't get left to walk home alone.

* Taken from 'Know your Limits' Issued by Home Office and N.H.S

Summary of the Report

The Report was carried out in the West Lancashire area between October 2006 and March 2007. It was a piece of work that was jointly funded by West Lancashire Crime and Safety Partnership and West Lancashire Youth and Community Service.

The Report was compiled from varying sources. These included young people at an Alcohol Conference and consultation groups in:

1. Schools
2. Youth groups and colleges
3. Duke of Edinburgh groups
4. Disabled groups
5. Young people in detached settings
6. Young people with alcohol related problems
7. Parents of young people

During this time, the young people, residing in West Lancashire who took part in this study, had widely divergent views on alcohol. They showed a varying amount of knowledge on the subject and were very keen to suggest recommendations for resources and service delivery.

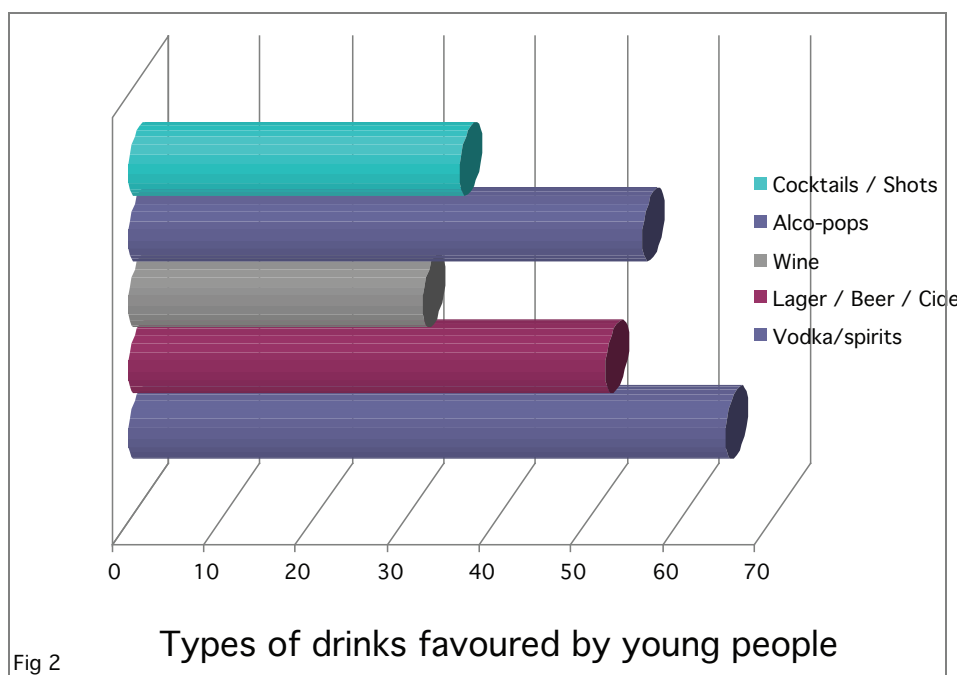
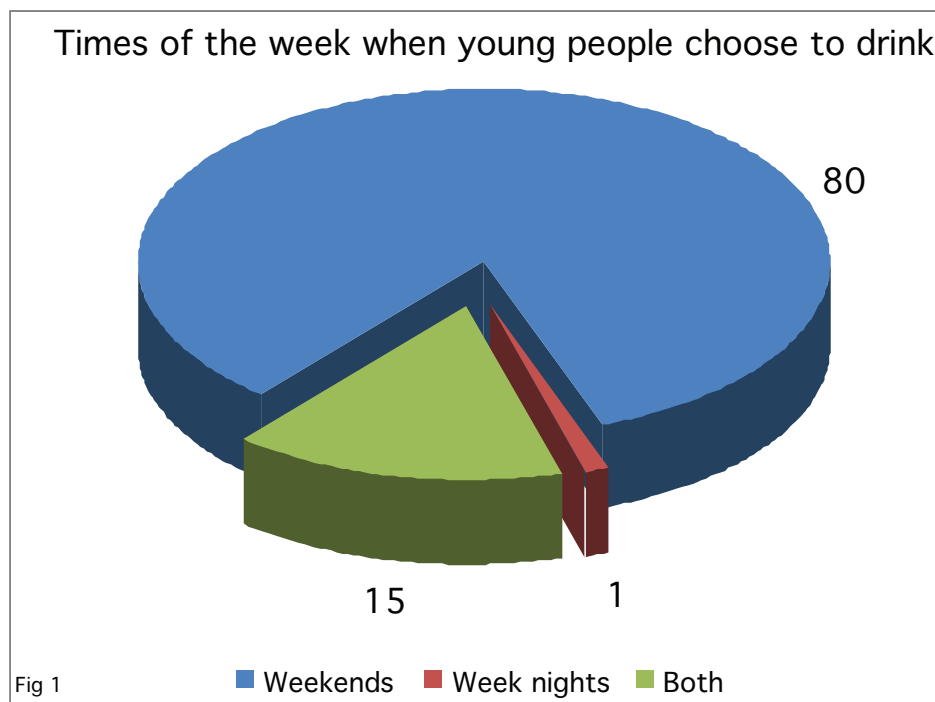
As part of the study, a questionnaire was given to a range of young people, from varying backgrounds. For some of the questions, the young people were able to choose more than one answer, for each particular question.

Young People's Experiences of Alcohol

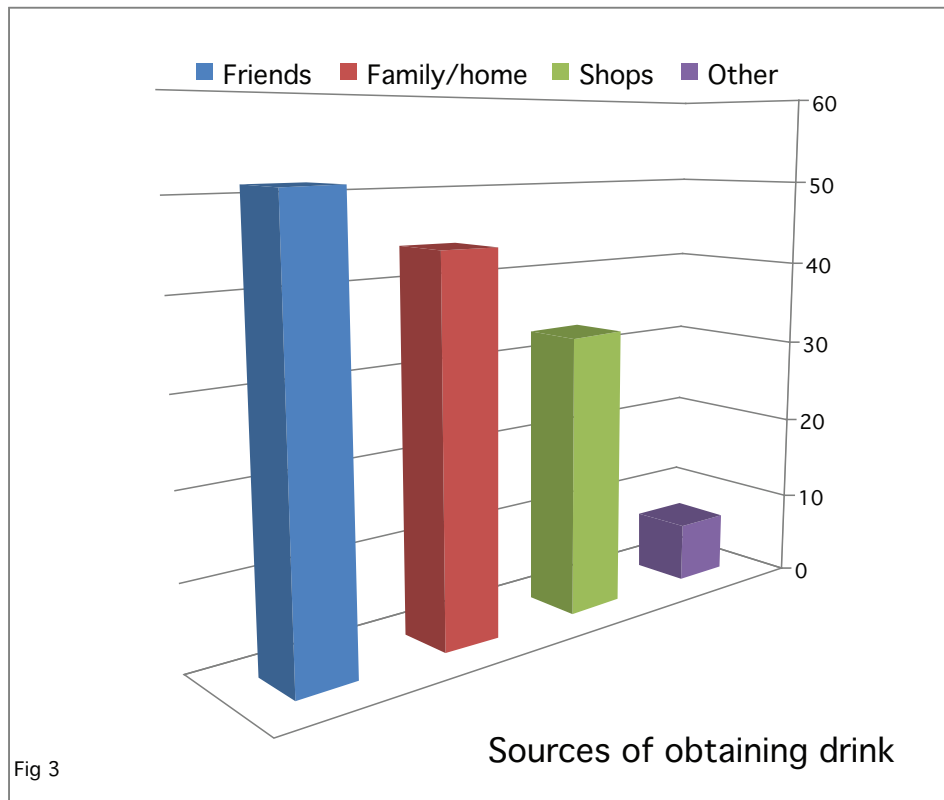
The questionnaire was given out to 100 young people, from around the area. These were some of the results:

When asked, (if they went out drinking), what part of the week, they would normally go, 80% of the young people answered only at weekends. A further 15% went out both at weekends and during week nights. Only 1% went out solely on weeknights. The other 4% did not drink at all. (See Fig 1)

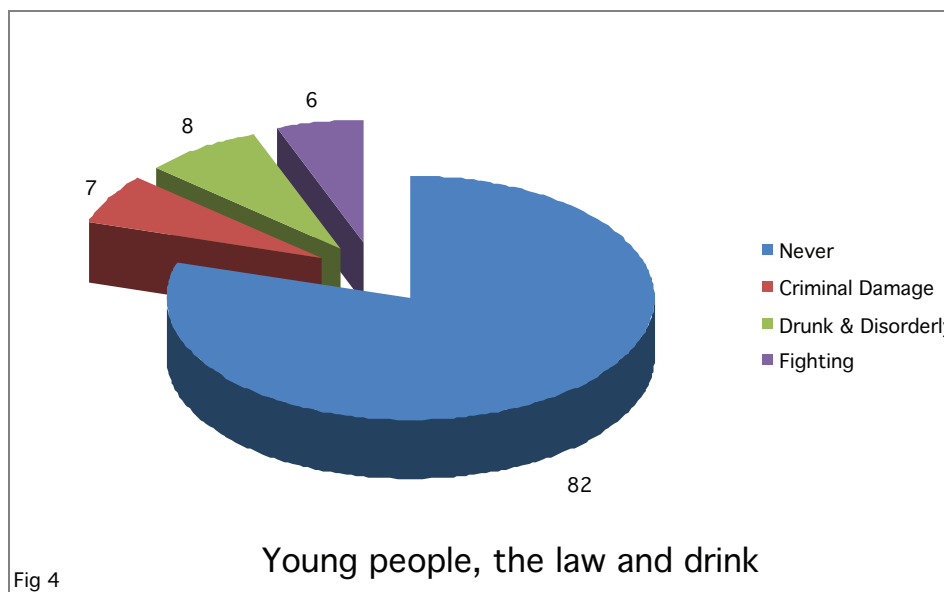
The types of drinks favoured by young people were mainly strong spirits, especially vodka. This was usually drunk neat, or in the form of an Alco-pop. Wine was the least favourite drink. (See Fig 2)



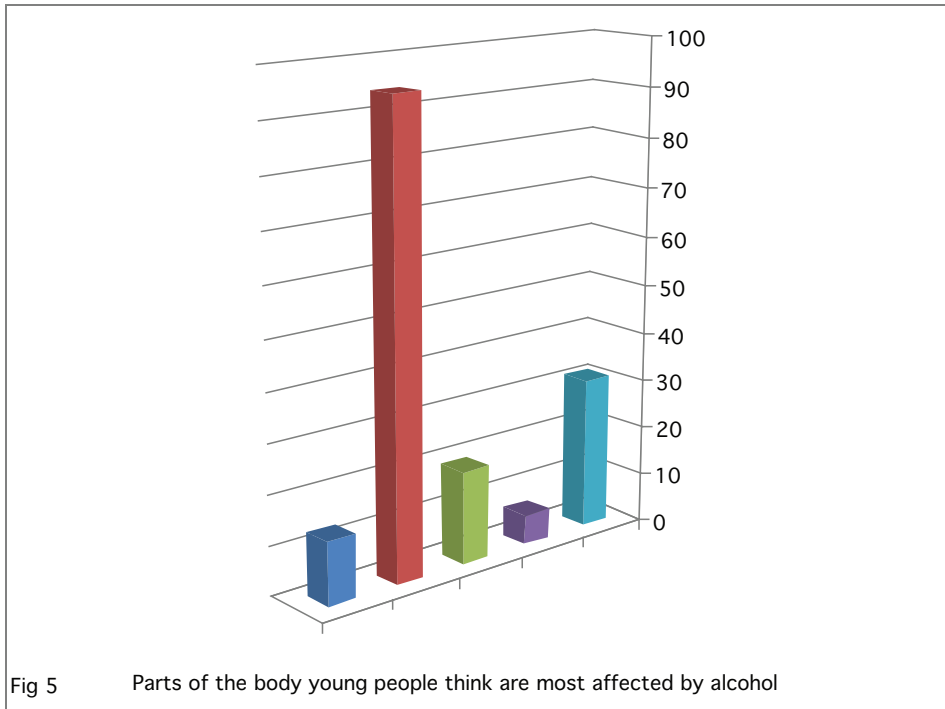
Many of the poll said that they obtained their drink from friends, home or family. About 30% obtained it from shops, (other people who were older bought it for them). Other sources included pubs (they were under-age drinking), cash and carry premises, or from older youths, who sold it to them. (See Fig 3)



Most people, questioned, had never been in trouble with the police through drinking. Although that did not necessarily mean that they had not caused damage to property and cars or defaced premises. It only suggested that they had not been caught. Those who had been in trouble, had usually also been fighting. (See Fig 4)

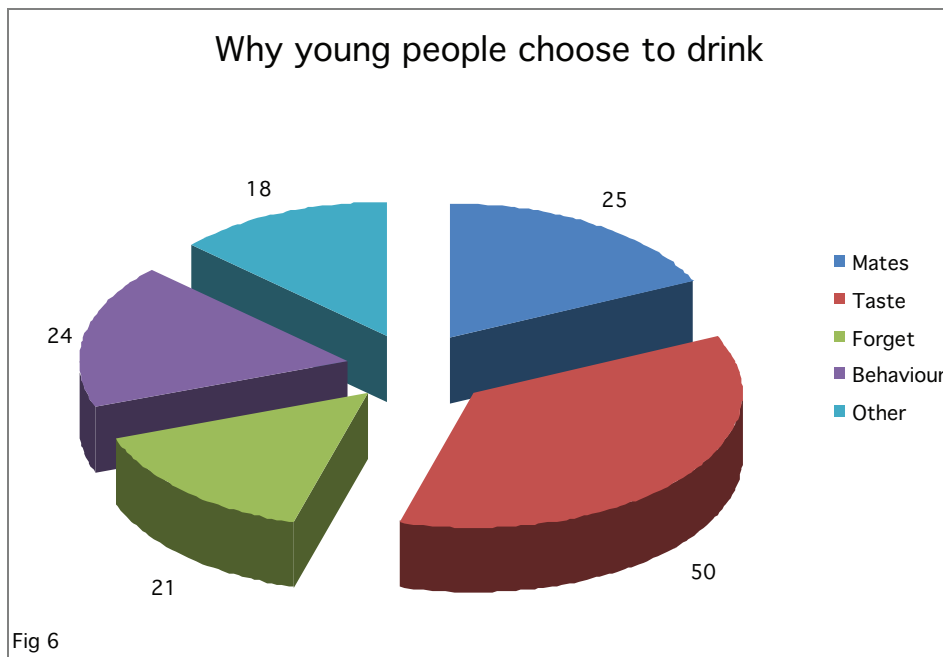


There was a good understanding about how alcohol affected a persons' liver. However, the effects it was having on other parts of the body were considered much more insignificant. (See Fig 5)



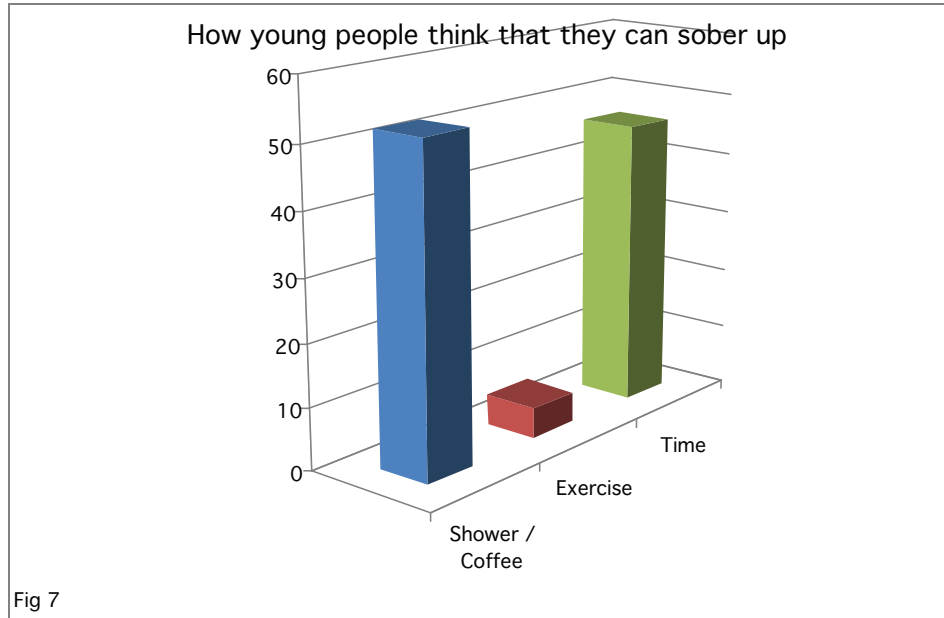
People choose to drink for different reasons. The taste of the drink was the main priority for many. Sadly, 21% of the poll said that they drank to forget what was going on in their lives. This included, bullying, abuse, neglect, feelings of loneliness, and being undervalued. Peer pressure was the reason given by 25%. Whilst 24% suggested that they liked the way, that the alcohol made their behaviour change.

(See Fig 6)



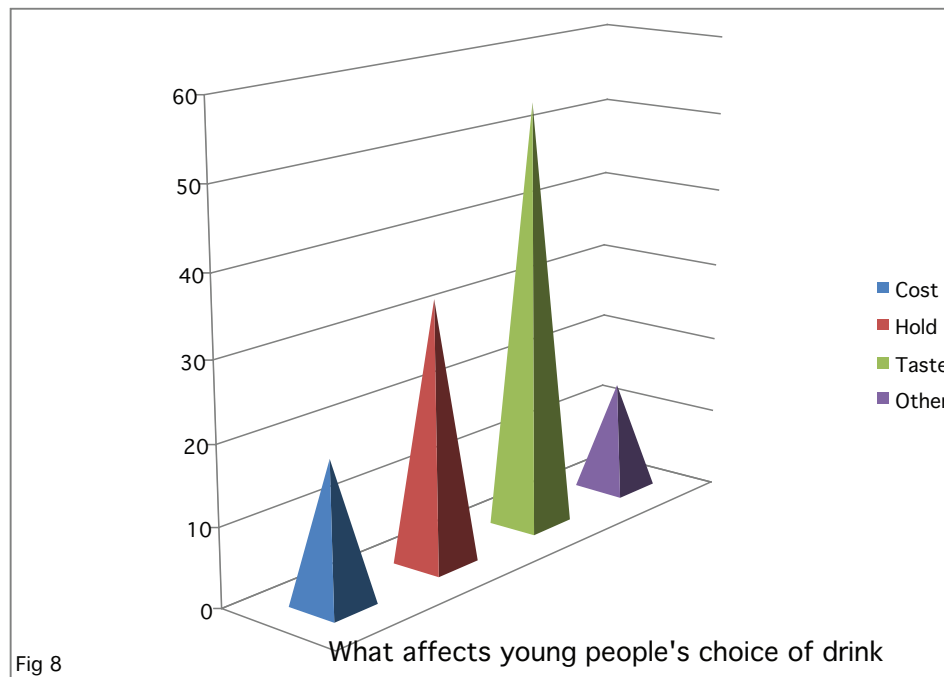
It takes about one hour, for one unit of alcohol, to be emitted from the body, in order that a person may be able to sober up. It was quite revealing, that 49% of the young people considered taking a shower and drinking coffee, would quicken up this process.

(See Fig 7)



The taste of the drink was a highly significant factor in choosing their preferred drink. The cost of what they were drinking came much lower in their list of priorities.

(See Fig 8)



When asked about where they drank, most of the young people drank at home, or in other people's houses. 25% were drinking out on the streets, or on parks or fields. This practice, they suggested was quite common, so that no one caught them. However, there had been instances when some of them had had accidents, which they had covered up, in order not to get into trouble. (See Fig 9)

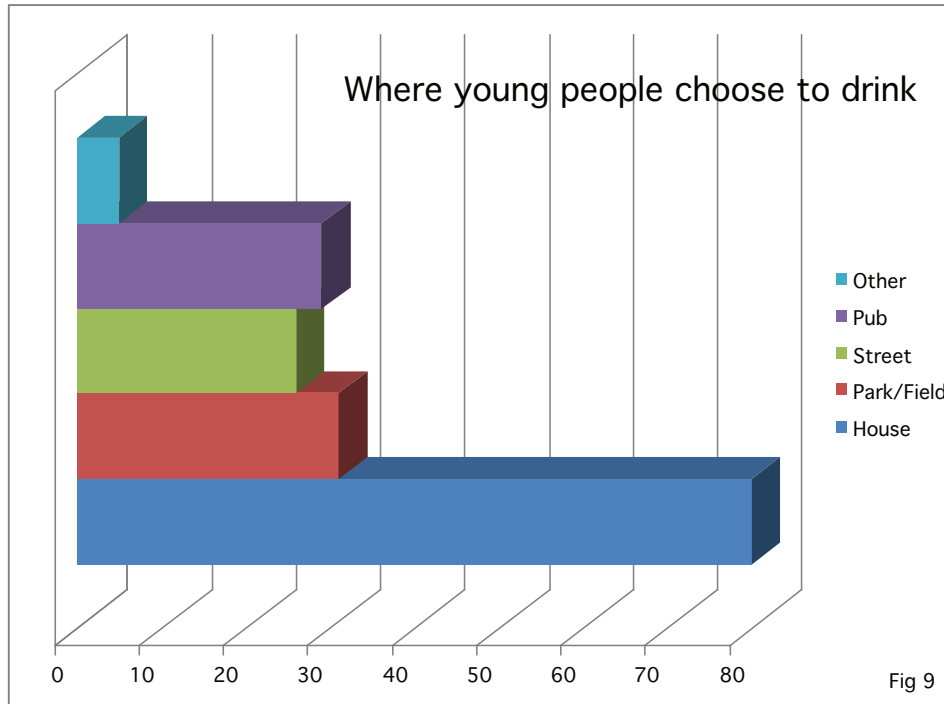


Fig 9

If young people were to receive messages from others about the dangers of drinking, a resounding 32% suggested that they would listen to their peers, whilst a further 29% would listen to youth workers.

When interviewed at the Alcohol Conference Day, a great many pupils said that they had found the characters in the play great, (the actors were playing the parts of teenagers), because they were talking in language that they understood, instead of being talked down to. Radio adverts, text messaging and messages via the computer, were also considered to be good ideas. (See Fig 10)

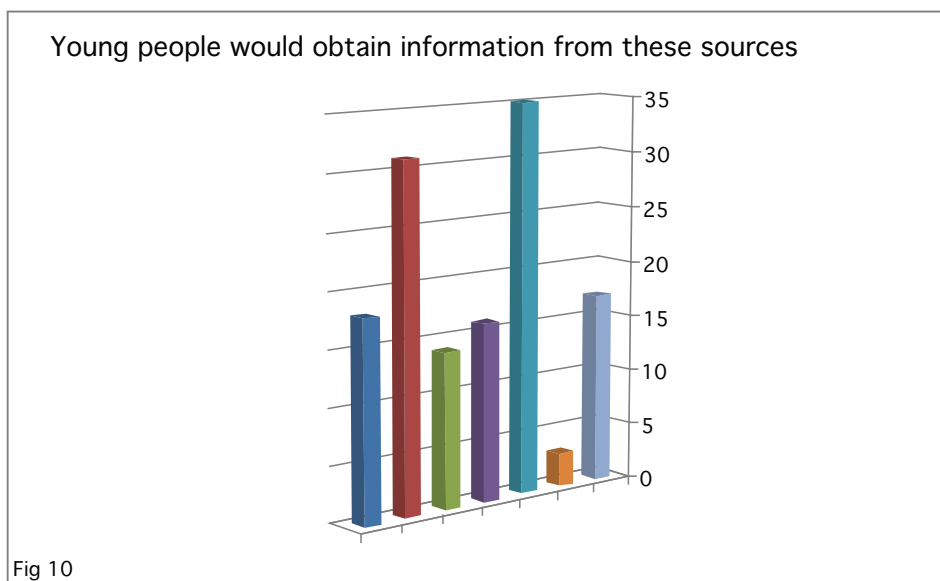


Fig 10

Many young people had tried out their first drink at home. The majority of them had been given it by parents or other relatives. 23% were aged 10 years old. 2% were 3 years old. (See Fig 11)

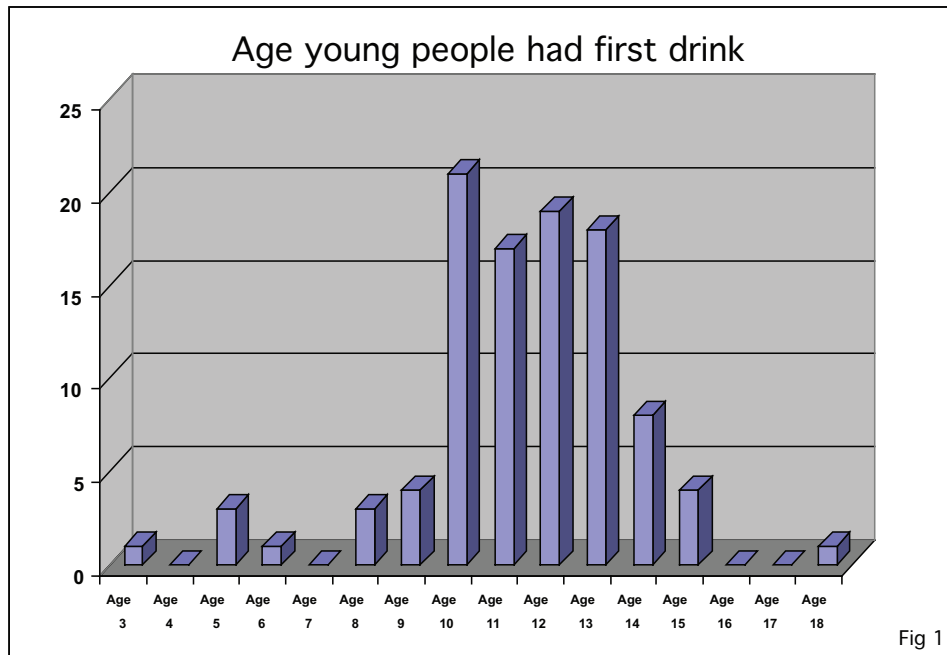


Fig 11

One significant factor that did emerge from the findings suggested that if a young person had been permitted to try drink out at home (from an early age); the age that they began drinking with their friends, was significantly higher. Also the less money that they had, the less likely they were to obtain alcohol and drink it.

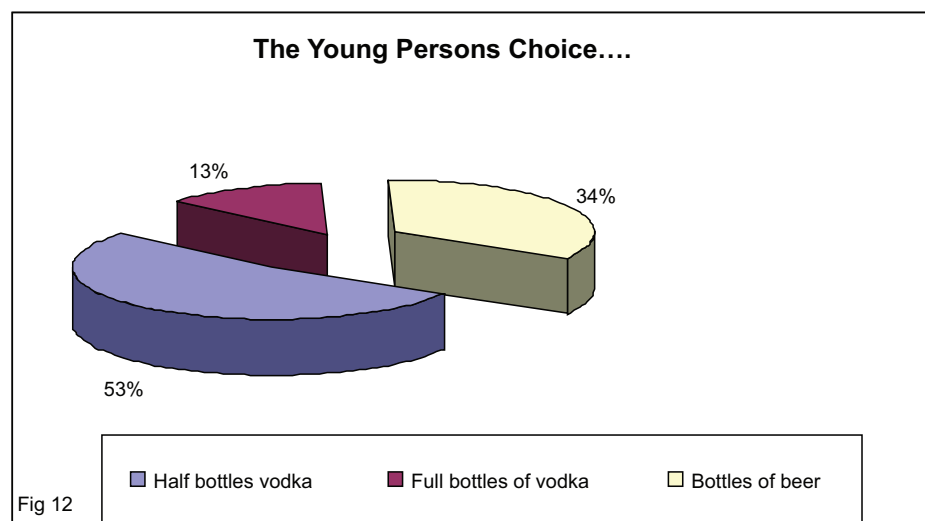


Fig 12

It was significant to notice that the young people who chose vodka or beer, as their preferred drink, were drinking in high quantities. As the graph shows, over half of those that chose vodka (53%) were drinking at least half a bottle on any given night....**13% were drinking up to a full bottle of vodka** and the young people who chose beer, were drinking an average of at least three bottles. (See Fig.12)

Compared to the findings of the parents, who admitted to drinking quite a lot when they were young, this choice of spirits is a startling statistic. The parents preferred choices of drink, were generally beer, cider or wine, not so many chose spirits.

ALCOHOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. If you go drinking, would you drink?

A. At the weekend B. On week nights C. Both

2. What kind of alcohol do you drink?

- Vodka or other spirits Lager/beer/cider Wine
 Alco-pops Cocktails/shots

3. How would you get your alcohol?

A. Friends B. Family/home C. Shops
D. Other.....

4. How much would you drink on an average night?

.....

5. Has drinking ever got you involved with the police?

A. Never B. Criminal damage C. Drunk and disorderly
D. Fighting

6. Where would you usually drink?

A. At someone's house B. On a park or field
C. In the street D. At a pub E. Other.....

7. If people wanted to tell you about drinking safely, would you...

A. Listen to the radio B. Listen to Youth workers
C. Read text messages D. Get messages from the computer
E. Listen to young people with alcohol problems
F. Other..... G. Not be bothered

8. Drinking large amounts of alcohol, over a long period of time can affect your health. Which parts of your body do you think it most affects?

Your... A. Stomach B. Liver C. Heart D. Lungs E. Brain

9. Why do you like to drink?

A. Because all your mates do

B. You like the taste

C. Because it helps you to forget things

D. Because it changes your behaviour

E. Other.....

10. Which of these do you think would help you to sober up?

A. A cold shower and coffee

B. Exercise

C. Time

11. Do you choose what you drink on.....

A. How much it costs

B. What you can get hold of

C. The taste of the drink

D. Other.....

12. How old were you when you first drank?.....

13. Who gave you your first drink?.....

14. What age are you now?.....

Young people's views on alcohol

Over the course of our study in West Lancashire the young people were asked to tell us some words associated with being drunk. These were the ones that they came up with:

* Legless	* Sozzled	* Paralytic	* Wrecked
* Plastered	* Blotto	* Hammered	* Pie-eyed
* Pissed	* Slashed	* Wasted	* Off yer head
* Tipsy	* Bevvied	* Bladdered	* Leathered
* Blasted	* Trolleyed	* Tanked-up	

They were also asked for some comments about experiences they had had when in the company of other young people who were drinking. These were their comments:

'The lads do it to show off in front of their mates. They think girls like it, but mostly the girls think they look stupid', Leanne aged 14.

'The girls can't handle drink like we can. They usually start giggling, then they fall over and usually they end up crying with their friends', Mark aged 15.

'Me and the group usually find a place away from everywhere, like the park. We get bladdered, then we dare each other....sometimes the next day you think, we shouldn't really have done that.... But it was a good laugh at the time...' Kieron aged 16

The young people were asked to think of some reasons why it wasn't a good idea to get drunk. These were some of the replies:

- You end up spending a load of money that you could have used for something else.
- You would look better and feel better...having a hangover is pretty 'shit'.
- You wouldn't end up fighting as much...people often lose their 'rag' when they've been drinking.
- It's not good if you're a sporty person....it makes you feel bad.
- It sometimes stops you 'getting off' with the person you fancy.
- It could stop you 'getting off' with someone you don't really want to be with.
- It could stop you having sex with people you don't want to have sex with.
- It could stop you from not wearing a condom.
- It could stop you from being 'sick as a dog' and throwing your guts up all night.

When questioned about the amount of drinks that they consumed some of our young people gave these answers:

‘Usually we would get half a litre of vodka each and have that through the night, especially if we were going to a party’. Emily aged 14

‘The lads and I would get a crate of ale, we’d all put our money in and buy it between us’, Tom aged 17

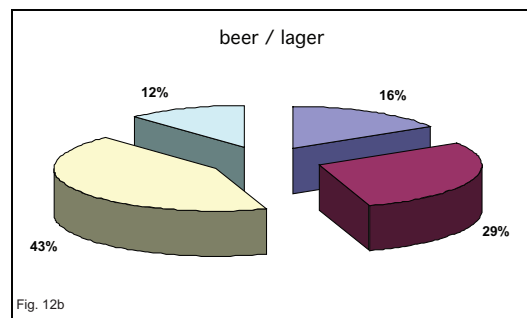
‘Sometimes we drink a bottle of vodka, sometimes we drink alco-pops...it all depends on how much money we have...’ Holly aged 13

When we put our statistics together the graph of how much the young people actually drank, to get drunk, looked like this:

Of young people who drank beer or lager:

- 13% drank 1 - 2 bottles
- 29% drank 3 – 5 bottles
- 43% drank 6 – 9 bottles
- 12% drank 10 or more bottles

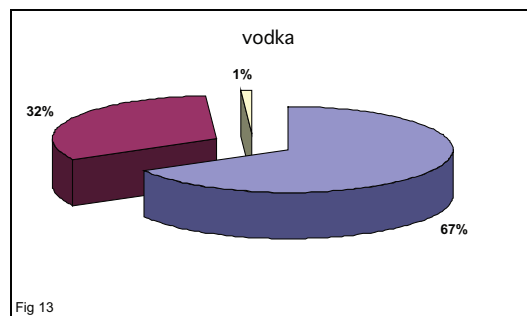
(See Fig. 12b)



Of young people who drank vodka:

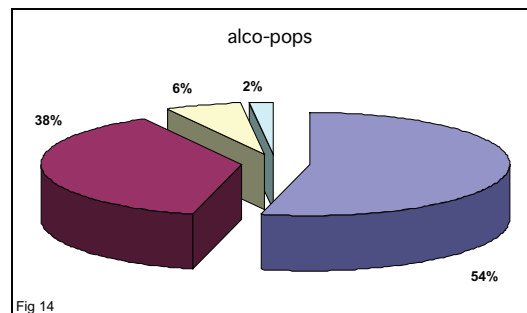
- 67% drank half a litre of vodka
- 32% drank a litre of vodka
- 1% drank more than a litre of vodka

(See Fig. 13)



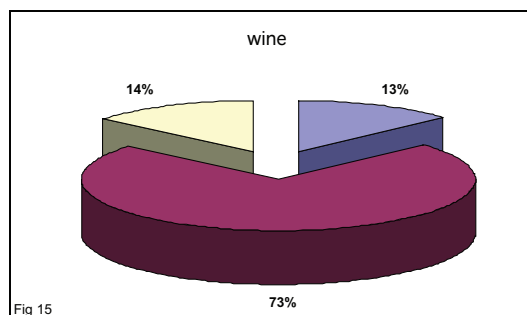
Of young people who drank alco-pops:

- 54% drank 1 – 2 bottles
- 38% drank 3 – 5 bottles
- 6% drank 6 – 8 bottles
- 2% drank up to 10 bottles (See Fig. 14)



Of young people who drank wine:

- 13% drank half a bottle
- 73% drank 1 bottle
- 4% drank more than 1 bottle (See Fig. 15)



Views of Parents being interviewed

During the course of compiling this report, many parents were interviewed about drinking and young people. The findings themselves were quite revealing about their own attitudes to drink and about their perceptions of the alcoholic drinks that are marketed.

One of the major concerns for parents when presented with the facts about the alcoholic content of such drinks as 'Alco-pops' or 'WKD'*, was that they had actually given these drinks or allowed their children to drink them, sometimes at parties or on other occasions. The parents often believed that they contained a very low percentage of alcohol. These were some of their reactions when they were actually informed that the 'Alco-pop' had in fact got more alcoholic content than half a pint of lager, or a single shot of neat vodka....

"I am just shocked! They lead you to believe that these drinks are like shandy..."

"I feel awful, letting her drink it... (At a family wedding)... It's almost as if I've encouraged her to drink.."

"I've been letting him and his mates drink three or four of these in the house at the weekends... I never realised.."

"Something should be done to educate us parents. The marketing of these products is very clever. No wonder there are so many young people in trouble with drink..."

"The government should step in and stop these drinks being glamorized..."

"There should be clear labelling on the bottles to inform people about what's in them and what harm it can do..."

Other views about drinking in general were mixed...

"In my day, we drank cider or martini, the children are being encouraged to drink strong spirits from the offset..."

*"I won't allow my children **any** drink. They know it's wrong, they know it can harm them..."*

"It's time something was done about this binge drinking. I let my daughter try it out at home, so that hopefully she won't feel the need to hide what she is doing from me... you can only hope that what we as parents are doing, is right..."

"Who is buying this alcohol for them? I understand that some of it is obtained from homes, but there must be other sources who are obtaining it for them...The laws should be stricter..."

These views were more liberal...

“Well I started drinking when I was their age...so I suppose they have to start somewhere.”

“One or two at a party can't harm them...”

“They're gonna do it anyway, so you might as well know what they're drinking...”

“He's old enough to make his own decisions, hopefully if he gets drunk, he won't want to do it again...”

“You're not going to stop them. You just have to hope that if they do it when we're not around, that they drink safely...”

“If they're drinking in a safe environment, at home or at a family do, then at least you can keep your eye on them and monitor what happens to them...Better than them drinking out on the street with their mates... you don't know what sort of trouble they could get into...”

“When I was his age, me and my mates could down a good few pints...If he gets into a fight he'll learn the hard way...”

*“We **all** drink...at parties, at the weekend...to celebrate...you can hardly tell them not to do it...”*

“They're not doing anything that people haven't done before. We've all done it... they're gonna try it, whether we like it or not...”

“She goes out with her mates at the weekends...how do I know what they're up to? They're hardly gonna tell us are they...”

After listening to many of these comments, it would appear that a lot more must be done to educate the parents. They must be made aware of how much alcohol exists in the marketed brands of drinks, which many of their children are consuming and the impact that it could have on them in later life.

Ways to get alcohol out of the system

When questioned about the ways to sober up, the parents themselves provided some interesting answers. From going for a run, taking a cold bath or swimming! A startling 48% thought, that by drinking coffee and taking a shower, the alcohol would leave the body quicker and they would sober up.

Knowing what a unit of alcohol is.

The parents were also presented with several glasses and asked to pour out a measure of alcohol that they would consider to be one unit of alcohol. This proved to be very difficult, just as it had with the young people. The wine glasses proved especially difficult, as they were all different sizes. Many parents commented that they were obviously drinking more units themselves, than they had realised. As they had previously assumed that the glasses held one unit and in some cases they actually held two or three.

It would therefore be very valuable, to put the unit measures on the labels of the drinks. This would ensure that people are made aware of just how much they are consuming, just as it would be beneficial to give some indication of the risk factors involved in consuming great quantities of alcohol. (Perhaps like the health warnings on cigarette packets).

If this were to take place, then people whether young or older, could make informed choices about their own alcohol consumption.

*Registered Trade Brand

Why do young people drink?

During my research I was able to talk to some young people, who in the past have had serious problems with drink. I was privileged for them to talk to me candidly, about how experiences in their lives led them to use drink as an escape, and the consequences that drinking had on them.

For the purposes of our report, their names have been changed.

Jenny's Story

When I was eight years old my mum got cancer. When she died, it left me and my older brother Dean on our own with dad. At first, nan used to come round and help us. ...get us ready for school and make our tea and everything. Then she stopped coming. I think dad had a row with her. Dean and I just started looking after ourselves really.

Dad always seemed sad. That's when he started drinking. I think it made him forget about how sad he felt. He used to get angry so we stayed out of his way. When Dean finished school he said that he'd had enough of dad so he moved into a flat with his mates. He would come and see me, or meet me when dad wasn't around. He said he hated dad.

*Dad's drinking carried on and one night he came into my room when it was dark.....he said he missed mum and I reminded him of her....**it was a horrible night.***

After that he started coming into my room on other nights when he was drunk. I couldn't tell anyone. Dean would have killed him. It was so bad one night I found dad's bottle of wine and drank some. It made me feel better, because I didn't have to think about things. It made me forget.

I started hanging round with a gang on the street. They were good fun. They all drank. They could get hold of vodka, and alco-pops...all kinds of stuff. One of them had an uncle who worked in an off-license. When he went to the cash and carry, he would get some for us.

I loved being with them. It got me out of the house. It helped me forget what it was like, when I went home and was left with dad.

We started having fights with other gangs. I was pretty good. Everyone loved me in the gang, because I was hard. So I got a great reputation. The police were always on our backs. It was fun. We'd have a fight...the cops would chase us....when we got away from them; we would celebrate and get pissed.

One night I was having a fight with another girl. She'd been calling us names across the road. Her and her mates. I managed to grab her and hit her. I had her pinned down and she hit her head on a stone. The next thing she was out cold and there was blood dripping down. I yelled at the others to run and we all legged it.

Later that night when I was at home, there was a knock at the door. The police took me away. Luckily, the girl wasn't too badly injured, but I was referred talk to someone. They wanted to know why I was drinking. Why I was fighting. The usual stuff.

At first I didn't tell anyone. But one day I couldn't help it. I just started crying. It all came out. I didn't want to get my dad into trouble.....

The counsellor told me that it wasn't my fault.....that my dad needed help too.

Since then things have been different. I don't really see the old gang anymore and I am going to do some exams at college. I do still drink, but not the way I used to.....

Carl's Story

Carl was seven years old, when his dad left home. His mum began going out socially...with friends and workmates. Carl's older brother and sister were left in charge of him. The older brother joined a gang and began fighting in the street. When he wasn't fighting rival gangs, he was fighting with Carl and his sister at home... His sister started staying away from the house more and more, leaving Carl at home to take the punches.

'I tried to talk to me mum when she came home, but she always busy with her mates. When she got her new fella, I never saw much of her at all. She usually stayed round at his house. If she was at home, she was usually pissed. ...I was mainly on my own'.

'..I started goin' round to see me dad. That was great, till his girlfriend came. She didn't like me and when they had the baby, she wouldn't let me go round any more'.

In his desperation Carl began mixing with a street gang himself. They got older teenagers to buy drink for them. Usually the gang were consuming between half to a litre each, of vodka, during one drinking session. 'It was fun' he confided, being with people who wanted him. Carl was small for his age and the gang used to send him through the skylight windows of properties, so that they could break into them.

This became a regular pastime. One night a gang member was dared to steal a car and drive it. They got away with it the first few times, but eventually they were all caught.

In some ways this was Carl's salvation. He was referred to social services and after finding out about his family history, he, his brother and his sister were all given help.

Mark's Story

Mark lived with his two brothers and his mum. He remembers the police often being at his house, and his dad being in trouble. Eventually his dad didn't live with them any more (he had actually been sent to prison). Mum made a new life for herself and the boys, eventually meeting someone new. Mark and his brothers still had visits with their dad. Mark told his social worker that he didn't really want to see his dad, but the social worker told him, that his dad really wanted to see him and his brothers and that he had rights to see them.

Mark's dad didn't like the mum's new boyfriend and he told the boys that it would be good for them, if they trashed his house. The boys didn't want to do it, but dad threatened that if they didn't do it, that they knew what he'd do to them.

Mark said he hated his dad, but he was scared of him. He and his brothers began pinching things from the house; sometimes money, sometimes stuff to sell. They trashed it up a few times. He said they felt bad, but they felt scared of what their dad would do. For him and his brothers having a drink first, made it not seem so difficult to face either his dad or his mum and her boyfriend.

Mum's relationship eventually finished and she was at the end of her tether with the boys. She couldn't understand why they hated her new boyfriend so much. It took one drunken episode for her to realise what had been going on.

Mark got hold of a litre of whisky and because he felt so bad at what they had done, he drank the lot. When he passed out, his brothers alerted their mother and he was rushed to hospital. It was only at this point that the brothers told the mother that their father had threatened to **kill her** if they didn't do what he asked them to do.

Thankfully all access rights have been denied to the father and the boys are now able to pick up the threads of their life with their mum.....

Young People: The Law and Alcohol

There are many laws governing young people and alcohol:

- It is against the law to give a child under the age of 5 an alcoholic drink.
- If you are aged 10-15 years and drinking in a public place, police can take you home to your parents and give you a £30 fine.
- If you are under 16 and with an adult it is up to the discretion of pub whether they let you in or not.
- If you are 16-17 years and drinking in a public place, the police can give you a £50 fine and send a letter to your parents and your school.
- If you are aged 16-17 and accompanying an adult into a pub, the adult may buy you a cider, beer or wine, if you are having a meal at a table.
- If you are under 18 and working in a pub or shop, it is against the law for you to sell alcohol without supervision. You could be fined £80.
- If you ask somebody over 18 to buy alcohol for you and they attempt to do so, they are breaking the law. They could be fined £80.
- If you are under 18 and attempt to buy alcohol, you are breaking the law. You could get an £80 fine.
- If you are under 18 and caught drinking alcohol in a public place, the police can take the alcohol and pour it away. They may also take unopened bottles from you.
- If any pub or shop is caught selling alcohol to somebody under the age of 18, they can be fined up to £5000. They could also lose their licence to sell alcohol.
- It is against the law to deliver alcohol to anybody under the age of 18.
- If you are under 18 and drinking in a pub, (but are not eating a meal with adults), you are breaking the law and can be fined £50.

Alcohol and the Law

The licensing Act 2003 outlines the law, relating to the sale of alcohol, as well as other activities, including providing entertainment i.e. a performance of live music or late night refreshment.

Outside Licensed Premises:

- The police can confiscate alcohol from young people under the age of 18. The procedure would be, to pour the alcohol down a drain or get the young person to do this.

There are designated areas around a town or city where alcohol is allowed to be consumed. If alcohol is consumed outside of these areas, then the police may confiscate the liquor. Failing to comply with the police may lead to an arrest.

Issuing fixed penalty notices for disorder for alcohol related offences that include:

- Being drunk and disorderly.
- Purchase of alcohol in a licensed premise for consumption by a person under 18.
- Delivering or allowing delivery of alcohol to a person under 18.
- Being drunk in a highway.
- Consumption of alcohol by a person under 18 in licensed premises.
- Allowing consumption of alcohol by a person under 18 in a bar in licensed premises.

Licensing of alcohol is strictly controlled and misuse of alcohol is still a major cause of crime. Also the risks to health are great.

In Licensed Premises

- Licensees are now known as **Designated Premises Supervisors (DPS)**. Only one of these per premises is allowed. This person would be ultimately responsible anything that happened on the premises.
- Children and young people are allowed on licensed premises provided that they are supervised by someone over the age of 18.
- Persons under 18 may now be employed on licensed premises, however each alcohol sale must be authorised by the holder of a personal license.

Permitted hours of the sale of drink and provision of licensable activities:

- The permitted hours of the premises are shown on the license, which should be on public display.
- They will vary from one premise to another and so may the permitted activities.
- Activities outside of those hours are an offence and can be stopped. Any prosecution for engaging in an unlicensed activity the penalty may include prison.

Alcohol Related Crime

- The current cost to society of alcohol related violence is estimated at £20 billion per year.
- Alcohol Concern estimates that alcohol is a factor in 40% of all recorded domestic violence incidents.
- Street drinking was felt to be a problem by 7 out of 10 people surveyed by the 'Portman Group'.
- They also say, that a quarter of all adults claim to have been a victim of alcohol related violence themselves.
- The Youth Justice Board estimated in 2003, that 16% of school attendees who had committed crime had said, that they had been under the influence of alcohol, at the time the crime was committed.

Police Intervention

The Police try to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in a number of ways. These include:

- Issuing the fixed penalty notices (as mentioned previously).
- Working with Trading Standards to encourage licensed premises and off-licenses to participate in identification schemes.
- Working with the drinks industry to encourage sensible drinking through limiting drinks promotions such as '2 for 1'.
- Providing training to private security workers on how to deal more effectively with people who have been drinking too much.
- Facilitating safer journeys home – e.g. by marshalling taxi queues.
- Making sure there is a visible police presence in town and city centres during hot-spot times.
- Facilitating the development of pub watch schemes.
- Using powers under Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997 to confiscate alcohol being drunk by under age people.
- Greater use of CCTV to diffuse potential disorder in town centres.
- Closure of premises using powers in Licensing Act 2003.
- Having regular PACT meetings with members of the local community, to air any specific problems.

**Taken from Lancashire Constabulary Police and Communities Together website*

Campaigns and Projects That Have Taken Place in Other Areas

There have been many different types of campaigns and projects run in different areas. All of which are different, but also significant in relaying the message to young people about the dangers of alcohol. Here is a sample of those.

Easy Tiger Campaign- Lancaster University

The 'Easy Tiger' Campaign was run by Lancaster University Students Union, in conjunction with Lancaster and District Local Strategic Partnership, Lancaster Partnership against Crime and Lancaster Pub Watch.

The aim of the campaign was to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder in Lancaster city centre and to promote the interspersing of alcoholic drinks with soft drinks or water.

It also aimed at promoting awareness of consequences of alcohol misuse e.g. involvement in crime and disorder and effects on health.

The way in which this campaign tackled the problems were to:

Feedback from the general public is being monitored by using a competition through the 'Easy Tiger' web site.

Crime and Incidents

In the first month following the launch of 'Easy Tiger' (October 2006) there were 14 alcohol related assaults in Lancaster city centre. This compared to the same period of the previous year, when there had been 31 assaults. This equated to a 54% reduction in reported offences.

During 'Freshers week' 2005, there had been 14 alcohol related assaults, these included 6 student victims.

During 'Freshers Week' 2006 there were 4 alcohol related assaults and **NO** student victims.

In the first month of the campaign there was a 29% reduction in criminal damage in Lancaster city centre from 31 to 22.

**Information and statistics from Jan Brown Crime Prevention Officer Northern Division, Lancaster Constabulary*

UCE Birmingham Alcohol Awareness Campaign

- Distribute 10,000 sensible drinking cards throughout 9 college bars within Lancaster University and 42 licensed premises in Lancaster city centre.
- Circulate 150 posters promoting the campaign to licensed premises in Lancaster city centre.
- Engage 60 student volunteers, to promote the project directly to other students as part of the 'Freshers Week' activities.
- Circulate promotional packs to all licensed premises in Lancaster city centre and to the university campus. These contained balloons, bar 'wobblers' and t-shirts.
- Distribute 5,200 bottles of 'Easy Tiger' branded water to licensed premises.

- Advertise on the side of buses and play radio advertisements.
- Play advertisements through Lancaster University Students Union digital screens, and promote in the student press.

Results and feedback from the campaign

The scheme was officially launched on Monday 2nd October 2006.

The informal feedback from the Pub Watch members (all licensees in Lancaster city centre) was very positive. The licensees liked the campaign and commented that customers appeared to have been ordering pints of water more often than usual.

The supplies of bottled water ran out within the first two weeks of the campaign being launched.

All licensees would have liked further supplies of the branded water.

The popularity of the posters was such that they kept being 'removed' and had to be replaced in many premises.

Feedback from students is yet to be received as part of a survey undertaken by Lancaster University.

A two-week campaign was launched by The Students Union at UCE Birmingham, which was supported by the West Midlands Police. A programme of activities took place. These included a campaign on sensible drinking, in which fun events were planned. These were designed to assess levels of drunkenness among individual students. Leaflets and posters were distributed around the campus to promote the activities.

The first week concentrated on sensible drinking. Students were signposted to information about the dangers of alcohol via leaflets and other information.

The second week of the campaign promoted dangers of drinks being spiked. The West Midlands Police had a stall at Birmingham's Perry Bar campus. This was aimed at spreading the message about leaving drinks unattended.

During the week colour the police displayed co-ordinated posters around the campuses. Each colour represented a different drug. On the last evening, the police went around the Union bar with pegs to match the colours on the posters and place them on unattended drinks.

The aim behind this was to make the students aware of just how easy it could be, to have their drinks spiked. Obviously this was done in a fun, yet informative way.

One of the female students commented how shocked she and her friends had been, when they realised that their drinks had been tampered with, whilst they had all been up dancing. It had, pointed out for them, the issue of safety when drinking.

* *Birmingham University*

Anderson High School Shetland: Peer Education Alcohol Campaign

Through the Barclays New Future education sponsorship scheme, The Principal Teacher of Guidance/Peer Support at Anderson High School in Shetland, applied for a £3000 grant to create a peer education scheme about alcohol.

A selected team of year 9 students were chosen. They themselves were considered vulnerable and in need of support, to train as peer educators, and develop a project to raise awareness about alcohol. The selected students received training on how to communicate effectively and work as peer educators. They then set about finding out how much was really known about alcohol, both amongst themselves and other local young people.

Initially the pupils were asked to answer a questionnaire, which hoped to find out their involvement with alcohol. Then the student's devised a quiz, to test the pupil's knowledge. The group designed and produced a colourful leaflet. This provided information about alcohol. They also made posters and then assembled a 'booze box'. This consisted of a case of bottles and cans, to test the children on their knowledge of units. Pupils had to estimate how many units each bottle contained, and then inform their peers about the dangers of alcohol.

The team set up an 'Alcohol Road show' that toured local primary and secondary schools. Karl Dempster, one of the students, commented....

"Working as a peer educator has made me think harder about drinking and I hope the advice we give to other people will make them think too because there are a lot more risks involved in the misuse of alcohol than I realised. The going has not always been easy, but we are getting there."

Outcomes of the project

- Since the project began, there has been a significant drop in alcohol abuse amongst young people in Shetland.
- The project allowed students at Anderson School and the local primary schools, to really learn and think about alcohol and their relationship to it.
- Relationships developed between different age groups and there was peer understanding.
- The project empowered student within their own environment, and allowed them to set goals and run campaigns.
- There was development of communication skills.

Extensions to the project

- The case study has been used to explore active citizenship in PHSE.
- It has been used by schools from other locations, to develop class discussions and investigations into the issues around alcohol and under age drinking.
- It has been used to work with students to identify potential problems in their local community and assist them in planning campaigns, which would tackle the problems, define targets and methods of achieving them.

ZAC's Youth Bar in Farnworth, Bolton

This was set up as a Christian Charity, but it is used by young people from all over the area, despite their religious persuasion. Over the past year more than 500 young people have used 'Zac's Bar' regularly.

The non-alcoholic youth bar offers a Friday evening bar, along with many other activities under the 'Sycamore Project'.

These include:

- After-school clubs
- Workshops
- Holiday clubs
- An Asian Girl's drop-in session
- Zac's Teen- a bar night for young people with special needs
- Zac's Pack- involving young people in social action projects e.g. litter picking, bag packing and gardening for old people's homes
- Football training
- Detached work
- Information and support

The bar has recently secured funding from Barclays' Community Champion Scheme, which was used for redecoration purposes.

Projects Undertaken in West Lancashire

Throughout the course of the research for this report, it was decided that we would try out some projects and events for ourselves. Here is a synopsis of some of those:

Funxion!

Funxion was a non-alcoholic, under 18's, music event, which was held at The Comrades Club, Ormskirk on January 19th 2007.

The event was publicised around the Ormskirk area, using posters and fliers. These were taken into secondary schools and displayed in the town itself by shopkeepers, community centres, on notice boards-boards and by local colleges.

Tickets were sold to the young people, and with each ticket they obtained their first non-alcoholic drink free. All other drinks could be purchased from a non-alcoholic bar.

On the evening, the venue was packed with over 280 young people, who danced to the rapping music of 'Young Kof 'and the sounds of other D.J's.

At the end of the evening the young people expressed their wishes that more such events would be held, as it had been a **Fantastic Night!!**

The event was staged by R.T. Events and was jointly funded by the West Lancashire Youth and Community Service, West Lancashire Safety Partnership and Lancashire District Council.

Funxion Night



Alcohol Awareness Conference

The Alcohol Awareness Conference took part on February 2nd 2007.

Year 9 students from local high schools were invited to the Conference, which took part at The Lancashire Manor Lodge in Skelmersdale.

During the day, the students were able to take part in workshops run by Youth Work Staff, with the assistance of the Police, The ASBO Team and Addaction. These included themes on 'Risky behaviour through alcohol consumption', 'Alcohol and the law', and 'Young people, alcohol and their health'.

After a well-earned lunch, the students also had the chance to see 'Dizzy Aid Diaries', which was a theatre production, produced by The Figment Theatre group, from Yorkshire. The play incorporated an interactive workshop that the young people played a part in.

Concluding the day, there was a panel of professionals, with representation from the ASBO team, Addaction, the Youth Service, and the police on hand to answer any of the pupil's questions. The students were also asked to complete an evaluation sheet.

The feedback from the whole day was immensely positive, from both the students and the teachers, who had brought them.

Altogether the day was a great success and was enjoyed by those who participated in it.

Young People's knowledge on alcohol and alcohol-related issues

In the findings of this report, it was interesting to get the views from the young people about their own perceptions and understanding of alcohol. They seemed to have quite a good grasp about the harms associated with alcohol, but did not apply that knowledge in their own drinking behaviour.

Many young people who had begun drinking at an early age, continued to drink through their teenage years. The consumption of alcohol steadily increased with age and how much money they had readily available.

The most common illegal drug that young people admitted to taking while or after drinking alcohol was cannabis.

Many young people admitted to being in a car that had been driven by someone who had been drinking, although very few admitted to drink-driving themselves. There were a few young people who had been involved in drink-driving accidents, at least two of these, had had fatalities.

The views of the young people towards alcohol were very mixed. Most had a reasonable understanding of the physical, social and psychological damage that alcohol causes. Many saw alcohol as a very sociable drug, used by the majority of adults in celebratory scenarios.

For some young people they experienced alcohol as a way of masking feelings, both for themselves and for adults in their lives.

Parental views on alcohol definitely appeared to influence a young person's perception of whether it was a 'good' or 'bad' commodity.

The young people came up with some very good solutions in relation to alcohol misuse. Many suggested that advertising should not be aimed at glamorizing the drinks, as this only led to a desire to try out each new brand. The participants being interviewed, readily admitted, that they themselves, were swayed by the advertising campaigns.

There were suggestions that the government could put further taxes on alcohol, in order to prevent people from drinking as much.

The age limit for legalised drinking could be raised to 21.

It became apparent through discussion that the majority of young people would not know where to go if they felt that they had an alcohol problem.

Those young people who had access to a young person's clinic e.g. The Grove (situated in Burscough) or The Information Shop (situated at the Concourse in Skelmersdale) or the Information Bus, which is a mobile vehicle used by the Youth and Community Service in West Lancashire were mentioned as possible places to seek advice.

Also local G.P.'s and school nurses were suggested as possible sources of information. However there was a consensus by many, that young people would feel threatened talking to someone who had such links with their school. It was the matter of confidentiality.

Working with the Fire Service

As another part of our report, to date, Lancashire Youth and Community Service have also run a pilot project with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, to produce an educational pack, concerned with alcohol and safety amongst young people. It is evident from our research that 'peer group' education works. Young people are open to listening to members of their own age group.

The pack consists of a set of photo-cards, each depicting a typical scene that could occur, in the life of a young person. The safety hazards are visible and the cards can be used as the basis for discussion, when dealing with young people.

A 'CD' has also been produced, that is to be shown on future 'Funxion' nights. This also portrays the same photographs alongside statistics about the number of accidents that occur involving young people and alcohol. These educational materials could be mass-produced and used in schools around West Lancashire Area. (See Attached photo-cards).

Working with the 'Go Live' Project

Throughout Lancashire, there is a great emphasis in not only building up links with young people and recognising their true potential, but also giving them a forum to explore their own creative talents, in a variety of ways. The 'Go live' project does just that. It opens up opportunities for young people to dance, sing, perform and play music, not only for themselves, but also for other young people, not necessarily in their own location.

In February 2007, three bands from Lancaster came to play for an audience at the Grove in Burscough. The 'Girls Group' (run by the Lancashire Youth and Community service) who frequent the Grove, played host to the bands and laid on a buffet and a '**non-alcoholic cocktail bar**'.

Several members of the Youth Service, along with some of the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service were on hand, to ensure that the evening ran smoothly. The evening was a great success; the bands were '**fantastic**', the '**refreshments**' were well received, and many of the young people made new friendships that have continued.

Future Projects

There are continued links with the agencies and new projects are being considered for the rest of 2007 across West Lancashire. These include incorporating **alcohol** with an anti-bullying campaign. This will take the form, yet again, of '**peer group**' education. A team of young people will be brought together to produce a short film, which will be shown to other youth groups. This will centre around alcohol related issues and their impact on bullying.

Projects in Lancashire

Throughout the Lancashire area, much good work is being undertaken, by the Lancashire Constabulary and other partnerships. For example 'ALTN8' is one such campaign. Agencies across Lancashire joined forces to promote safer drinking. This campaign, forms part of a wider Operation Nightsafe initiative to reduce alcohol related harm.

To curb the ever-increasing consumption of alcohol, including 'binge-drinking', which has been associated with an increase in liver damage and disease and other health related problems, the 'ALTN8' message is simple...

'Alternate drinks, days and lifestyle, to reduce embarrassment and hangovers in the short term, this then begin to challenge people's routines of regular excessive drinking. The desired change is to reduce excessive drinking, impacting positively across society as a whole'

It is hoped that there will also be a decrease in violence, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, self-harm and accidents.

ALTN8 promotes sensible drinking levels:

- **For most men:** between 3 – 4 units consumed per day or less indicates little or no health risk. 4 or more units of alcohol per day indicates an increased health risk.
- **For most women:** between 2 -3 units consumed per day or less indicates little or no health risk. 3 or more units of alcohol per day indicates an increased health risk.
- A pattern of regular drinking without drink-free days is discouraged for both men and women.
- Drinking above these levels is deemed 'excessive' or 'hazardous' and could lead to alcohol related problems.
- To drink 35 (in the case of women) or 50 (in the case of men) units of alcohol per week is likely to cause a person to develop physical/mental problems and they have a higher risk of becoming alcohol dependent.
- One unit equates to half a pint of beer, or a small glass of wine. There are two units of alcohol in a double whiskey and two units in a pint of lager.

The ALTN8 messages:

- Altn8 – Alternate drinks, Alternate the days you drink, Alternate venues.
- Altn8 – between drinks – have an alcoholic drink followed by a soft drink.
- Altn8 – between drinking sessions – an alcoholic based one and a soft drink based one.

** Taken from Lancashire Constabulary: Police and Communities Together website*

Operation Nightsafe

Operation Nightsafe is a countywide multi-agency initiative, which targets alcohol related crime and disorder by creating an environment where violence isn't acceptable or tolerated.

The campaign aims to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. It also aims to raise awareness of the problems created through underage and binge drinking.

Nightsafe involves a multi – partnership approach. The key partners include:

- Local Authorities
- Trading Standards
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- Ambulance Service
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Licensing Forums
- Primary Care Trusts
- Education
- Drugs Action Teams (DATs)
- Youth and Community Services

Key Initiatives

Operation Nightsafe teams across the county have developed the scheme by implementing a number of initiatives:

- High visibility policing operations in identified trouble spots at key times.
- Use of powers to confiscate alcohol.
- Test purchasing operations (in partnership with Trading Standards) in both 'ON' and 'OFF' license premises.
- Conducting multi – agency visits with partner agencies, which involves police officers speaking to licensees/managers of problem premises with appropriate action being taken if necessary.
- Developing CCTV, radio link schemes and improve the use of Pubwatch as a means of excluding problematic individuals.
- Sweeps on gangs of youths in trouble spots whereby powers to confiscate alcohol will be utilised.

Operation Summer Nights

Operation Summer Nights 2006

This campaign took place between 28th April – 1st September 2006. The operation sought to:

- Achieve a reduction in the incidents of anti – social behaviour, alcohol related crime, also criminal and domestic damage.
- It hoped to reassure the public that agencies, working together could tackle these issues and increase the general public's confidence and feelings of safety.
- To build on the positive work and behaviour of most young people, encouraging everyone to make respecting themselves and others a greater consideration.

Operation Summer Nights 2007 This takes place between 1st July – 31st August 2007.

The partnerships are growing on a yearly basis, as more and more agencies come on board, all with the same high expectations. That is:

- To see an improvement in health.
- To gain a better quality of life for young and old.
- To help people to gain a better respect for themselves and other people.

Best Bar None

The Best Bar None Scheme is being introduced by the Operation Nightsafe initiative. It is driven by the Lancashire Constabulary in partnership with multi-agency groups and the late night entertainment industry. The award seeks to establish a standard of excellence within the licensed trade.

It also aims to reduce crime and disorder associated with towns and city centres. The proposed scheme will have three separate categories. These include Pub, Club and Community Pub.

Questionnaires will be sent out for completion, followed by an inspection of each premises. At the end of a twelve-month period, awards will be given out at a formal dinner.

Good practice expected by these establishments would include, not permitting under-age drinking.

As part of the Nightsafe Initiative, Police Licensing Officers, conduct routine visits to licensed premises with a view to collating evidence and to deal with and report upon certain offences, should they occur.

These include under-age sales, drunken customers, the serving of alcohol beyond licensed hours and a breach of license conditions.

Multi-agency visits aim to raise awareness of other legislation to ensure that premises are operated safely.

Nationally statistics show that young people under the age of 16 are drinking twice as much today as they did 10 years ago and that by the age of 13 young people that drink, out number those that do not.

Alcohol Misuse: Service Provision in West Lancashire

During the study, it was important to see what type of provision we have for our young people in the area of service provision, for those with alcohol related problems. Our main source is **Addaction**.

Addaction

Addaction is a leading U.K. charity, working solely in the field of drug and alcohol treatment. Their clients come from all backgrounds and are of all ages. Some have long-term addiction and dependency problems. Clients' needs are assessed and a programme is provided to help them work towards abstinence.

Young Addaction South Lancashire

Young Addaction Lancashire will not be offering general advice and information to substance misuse in isolation. Tier 2 support will mainly be offered for young people in conjunction with Tier 3 treatment.

The main focus of the service will be offering Tier 3 treatment to young people (those 21 years of age and under) including the following:

- EST (Electro Stimulation Therapy)
- Motivational Therapy
- Brief Solution Therapy
- Key Working and Care Planning
- Access to young people specific prescribing service in partnership with 2 designated Medical doctors

Project workers will however engage in some Tier 2 provisions for the following groups of people:

- Those experiencing multiple risk factors
- Young people within specific vulnerable groups
- Sex workers
- Young people whose parents have problematic drug/alcohol use
- Homeless young people
- Young people who have offended or at high risk of offending
- Young people in care or in transition of leaving care

Taken from Addaction fact sheet.

South Lancashire Young Addaction www.addaction.org.uk

The Tower Project

The Tower Project is a multi-agency plan to reduce drug related crime in Lancashire.

The project helps young people to get their lives sorted out and promotes them to stop committing crime and quit 'being a slave' to their drug habit.

It includes people from various organisations including health professionals, the police, the probationary service and local councils.

It aims to assist young people to:

- Sort out benefit claims and make housing arrangements.
- Arrange doctor's appointments and secure treatment for their addictions quickly.
- Provide a drug support worker.
- Get in touch with voluntary services that can offer advice, support and counselling.

To enable a young person to get help from the team, they would first be assessed by members of the Tower Project Team. If the young person agrees to take part, they would be invited to sign a contract, which would allow all the agencies involved to share information to give the best possible help.

The young person would then be expected to:

- Co-operate with the drug treatment programme.
- Attend clinic appointments and meetings with project workers.
- Undergo regular drug testing.

The alternatives for these young people would be:

- A life in prison
- Severe health problems
- Returning to their old lifestyle
- Being targeted by the police

Inward House Projects

The Inward House Projects are based in Skelmersdale and are a Community Support Programme set up to help people with substance misuse. It is a registered charity, which is supported by the Lancashire Drug Action Team: **L.D.A.T.**

The West Lancashire Voluntary and Community Sector Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Network

Last year on the 19th October 2006, I was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the above Network. It was set up to:

- Strengthen the contribution of those in voluntary and the community sector that have an interest in the promotion of good health, social care and wellbeing.
- Establish effective communication structures to promote the Network to both service commissioners and service users.
- Allow members to raise issues or share information about specific health and social care and wellbeing topics.
- Act as a voice for the vulnerable and for those who experience health and social care inequalities.

Views from Professional Authorities in West Lancashire

Whilst seeking out the views of young people, their parents and their carers, it was also important to balance their views, with the views of ‘professional’ people who work within the remit of young people and alcohol-based issues.

From a police perspective, there was a degree of differing ideas. Some saw young people as a nuisance that could only be dealt with by imposing more sanctions. These would include:

- Passing more council bylaws e.g. no alcohol in public parks or municipal areas. (This would be put into effect, by putting up council signs that constituted ‘Designated Alcohol-Free Zones’).
- Having Dispersal Zones- where no more than two people would be able to congregate together.
- Having more CCTV cameras in place around the towns or villages.

Other suggestions included:

- Having campaigns to reduce hangovers. The emphasis would not be on a total ban of drinking, but would shift to the following day consequences. Thus fulfilling the aims of ‘The Harm Reduction Policy’.
- Having ‘Designated Driver’ campaigns. These are very popular in Australia, where designated drivers are offered the incentive of free ‘non-alcoholic beverages’ throughout the evening. Each designated driver would identify themselves to the manager of the establishment at the beginning of the evening.
- Water campaigns such as the ‘Easy Tiger’ campaign in Lancaster, which has produced great results.
- Continued use of ‘Pubwatch’ schemes. The police licensing teams focus on the behaviour at each establishment. They are then able to alert others to ‘criminal’ or ‘nuisance’ behaviour.
- The formation of an under 18s ‘non-alcoholic’ pub. The premises would remain the same as an adult establishment and would be properly managed, and supervised by trained staff, in accordance with pub rules. This could be linked to the partnership strategy, and involve police, local council, youth services, fire services etc. in the running of it.

Views From Other Agencies on Alcohol in West Lancashire

Researching the report has led me to be in contact with a variety of different organisations. I was lucky to be able to attend a course, which was run by the **West Lancs. Alcohol and Substance Misuse Team**.

Their course was run for any organisation or individual, who might come into contact with young people through their work. They offered valuable information and an insight into how to recognise young people who may be suffering with, or at risk of, alcohol related problems.

This gave us an awareness of what type of information should be directed towards the young people and direction on how to 'sign-post' or refer the young people.

This course was invaluable and more courses, of this nature should be funded, as there is **a distinct lack of Tier 1 and Tier 2 provision in West Lancashire. This is an issue that certainly needs addressing.**

The parents of the young people who were interviewed for our study also offered some views. They hoped that more information could be made available for themselves and other parents, in order that they may be better equipped to deal with any issues that may occur in their own family situations.

This included information about different types of drugs, especially alcohol. During one session, which I ran, the parents commented that they had heard of some types of drugs, but had never actually encountered them. Therefore they did not feel confident enough about to give advice to their own children.

Recommendations

- Issues around crime and safety, sexual health, and drugs can be explored through alcohol education. By linking these topics it is possible to take a generic approach to healthy lifestyles. These could include sport and fitness.
- As it is evident by the views of the young people, parents and families play an important role in modelling their views. More must be done to educate the parents and carers. Topics such as alcoholic measures, health issues, alcoholic content of drinks etc. must be made a priority in this area.
- Throughout West Lancashire more must be done to provide better training in Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention of alcohol problems, in the under 22 year old age range.
- More alcohol awareness training must be given to young people around the area, whether this is in the form of peer education programmes, conferences, non-alcoholic social events or other campaigns.
- Information on alcohol related topics could be accessed by young people via text messaging services or the internet.
- There must be continued multi-agency work as this has proved highly successful in fulfilling the needs of the criteria.
- In consultation with the breweries, there could be the possibility of opening a non-alcoholic pub. This could be done by securing a local pub premises specifically for young people under 18. It could initially be taken on as a 6 – 12 month contract, in order to assess the viability of its success.
- Young people are aware that advertising is deliberately targeted at their age range. Education programmes need to be set up to enable them to disassemble advertising and marketing strategies. This will help them to make informed choices and encourage them to critically assess the campaigns.
- Communication and education initiatives need to provide not only information, but also be linked to wider action in order to change attitudes, patterns of drinking and cultures. More information is needed to ensure that young people know where to access help or treatment for alcohol related problems.

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- Our Lady's Queen of Peace High School
- Tarlton High School
- Glenburn Sports College
- Burscough Priory Science College.

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- The Grove Youth and Community Centre
- The Music Workshop - Ormskirk
- Point Six Youth Club - Skelmersdale
- Duke of Edinburgh Groups

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West Lancashire Connexions Staff
The Y.O.T.S Team (based at The Willows, Skelmersdale)
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Paula Blasberry