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NICE Shared Learning Awards 2008



Reducing alcohol consumption in young people aged 11-15 in Staffordshire

Aim

To reduce the number of 11-15 year olds who regularly consume alcohol, and to reduce the quantity consumed by each individual. Evidence of effectiveness from published research demonstrated that this could only be done if the County Council worked together and in partnership with other agencies. A multi-faceted programme of education, information and enforcement was devised based upon understanding of the drivers for young people's alcohol consumption, and therefore what would result in behavioural change.

Objectives

- To reduce the number of 11-15 year olds who regularly drink alcohol by 5%, and to reduce reported mean alcohol consumption by one alcohol unit per week.
- To implement a preventative partnership-based programme through social marketing, with schools as the primary focus of contact with young people and parents/carers.
- To use technology, communications, publicity and the media to promote responsibility in relation to young people and alcohol, to tackle attitudes and harmful drinking.

Context

- Underage drinking presents a public health and community safety concern.
- There is a lack of joined-up thinking and conflicting messages about alcohol and young people.
- A 2006 baseline survey of 2500 11-15 year olds in Staffordshire showed that 33.1% of young people consumed a mean 6.9 units of alcohol each in the week before the survey, i.e. a greater proportion of young people in Staffordshire were consuming alcohol than was shown to be the case nationally, albeit drinking fewer units on average.

Results

Reduction from 33.1% of young people reporting an average individual consumption of 6.9 alcohol units per week in 2006 to 26.5% consuming 6.6 units of alcohol per week in 2008, delivered through:

- Schools Alcohol Adviser.
- Trading Standards enforcement activity to detect and prevent underage sales.
- Health-Bytes, a web-based interactive desktop package for schools and social networking sites to challenge attitudes and perceptions.
- Media communications, including coverage through newspapers, radio and local roadshow in town centres.

Monitoring and evaluation

Progress against the action and communications plans was monitored by a multi-agency steering group. Primary evaluation of results was through survey of over 4,500 11-15 year olds, and analysis of the results by the Council's research team. A wider evaluation of the whole programme was undertaken by Keele University. Results are published on the Staffordshire County Council website. The programme is described as an example of implementing NICE public health guidance on the NICE website.

Key learning points

- Necessity of partnership working.
- Using social marketing techniques to drive behavioural change.
- Success of IT-based communications.
- Need to challenge social attitudes to alcohol.
- Communications plan successful in engaging the media.
- Unable to evaluate the wider social impact.
- Build in evaluation from the outset!
- Easier to reduce the number of young people who regularly consume alcohol than to reduce the volume that individuals drink?

Staffordshire County Council

SHARED LEARNING AWARD ENTRY SUBMITTED BY

Organisation Staffordshire County Council

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