



Exploratory Research into Alcohol-Related Behaviour in Kirklees

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Prepared by 20/20 Research Limited.

**26 Bridge Street, Penistone, Sheffield, S36 6AJ
Tel: + 44 (0) 1226 767120; Fax: + 44 (0) 1226 767130**

**North House 1/2, Bond Avenue, Bond Estate, Milton Keynes MK1 1SW
Tel: + 44 (0) 1908 277700; Fax: + 44 (0) 1908 277799**

E-mail: jtyrrell@2020research.co.uk

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Executive Summary	4
1. Background And Context	7
2. Research Objectives	8
3. Methodology	9
4. Value Of Health	10
○ Perceived Dangers To Health Of Alcohol	
○ Smoking	
○ Diet	
○ Exercise/Fitness	
5. Development Of A Binge-Drinking Culture	19
○ First Drinking Experiences	
○ Underage Consumption Out Of The Home	
○ Reasons For Underage Alcohol Consumption	
6. Current Drinking Behaviour	26
○ Drinking Occasions	
○ Patterns Of Alcohol Consumption	
7. Reasons For Drinking	29
○ Perceived Benefits Of Drinking	
○ Negative Associations Of Drinking	
○ Factors That Encourage Drinking	
8. Discouraging Factors	38
○ Factors That Discourage Drinking	
9. Parenthood	42
○ Impact On Alcohol Consumption	
○ Education Of Children	
10. Knowledge And Practicality Of Safe Limits	44
11. Opportunities To Reduce Alcohol Consumption	48
○ Education	
○ Role Of The Family	
○ Pricing	
○ Drinking Venues	
○ Alternative Venues	
○ Promotion Of New Areas	
12. Impact Of Existing ‘Sensible Drinking’ Communication Campaigns	58
13. Conclusions And Recommendations	61

Executive Summary

Introductions To Alcohol

The way in which children get their first serious introduction to alcohol shapes the pattern of their future drinking behaviour. While there are some gentle initiations in the controlled environment of the home, many had first tried alcohol seriously with friends at the age of 13-15, either outdoors or at a friend's house or party.

Expectations for what is normal drinking at this age are set by siblings and older friends, who both exaggerate the amount they consume, and also shape the attitudes to being drunk as being a positive experience to which to aspire.

Teenagers are motivated to underage alcohol consumption through boredom, and see alcohol as an easy and readily available alternative to finding something else to do. Beyond this, drinking alcohol also meets some fundamental needs. It is a way of them showing to themselves (and to their peers) that they are no longer children, it is a mode of behaviour that they feel is expected of them and to which they aspire, and they want to conform to the common experiences of their peers. Drinking alcohol and getting drunk is seen as fun and exciting, and also is a facilitator to sexual interaction.

Some come to heavy alcohol consumption later, and this is the case for some new students, experiencing their first taste of independence and getting their first chance to experiment. The student intake is mixed in its experience of alcohol, but the social programmes laid on for students assume that people will be able to cope with a high alcohol intake. Heavy alcohol consumption opportunities are heavily promoted from the start, with no sense of balance, and with no extra care and supervision.

Alcohol In The Social Context

Habit and routine play a key role in patterns of alcohol consumption – often these are defined by work and family commitments, but also among groups of peers for the younger groups.

As with the younger groups in their formative drinking, once regular alcohol consumption is an established adult group activity, people are reluctant to be different from the rest of the group. The one exception to this is the acceptance of 'named drivers' being on soft drinks. This is an accepted option for them, but soft drinks by choice from others is seen as a sign of weakness.

Benefits Of Alcohol Consumption

The benefits from drinking alcohol are well understood and are shared across different socio-demographic groups. They revolve around three core areas

- Fun
- Release and
- Confidence

Different social groups placed differing levels of importance on each of these areas, largely dependent on their work, family and social commitments.

Perceived Dangers Of Alcohol Consumption

The primary concern about the negative effects on health from alcohol was almost exclusively the short-term effect and included immediate symptoms (vomiting, falling over) and subsequent hangovers, rather than longer-term damage.

While there is an awareness of long-term damage to the liver, this was characterised as affecting only long-term alcoholics, seen as far removed from their own patterns of drinking behaviour. Respondents are likely to underplay the severity of their own drinking (claiming that they know what their body can take, through experience), and also there is a sense that problems will develop only slowly, over a period of many years, with a chance to observe warning symptoms.

There is a sense that time is on the drinker's side, that they will be given sufficient warning to change, without any irreparable damage having been done.

Sensible Drinking

There was high awareness of units of alcohol as a general concept. Older groups performed better in terms of familiarity with knowing safe unit levels. However these levels were not considered to be meaningful, useful or sensible.

The levels were felt to be unrealistically low (for the whole population), and did not take account of variation between individuals – build, weight, age, and previous drinking capacity. They were certainly felt to be inferior to the limits which they felt they would know intuitively (as they know their own body).

There is also a critical lack of understanding of the implications of exceeding the recommended limits. This is in direct contrast to the understanding of the health risks associated with smoking or drink driving.

Drinking Health Campaigns

There was high awareness of some of the sensible drinking campaigns, with particularly strong levels of recall for the Superhero campaign. The visual

imagery had had an initial shock effect, although this was now wearing off somewhat.

Despite the awareness of the campaign, there was little claimed modification of behaviour as a result. One criticism of the campaign was that the situation was too extreme, and too far removed from their own normal drinking situations. The circumstances needed to be more targeted (probably with male and female variants, and different age ranges) to reflect more closely to their own activities.

Factors encouraging consumption of alcohol

Twelve factors are identified within the main body of the research as key drivers of consumption of alcohol.

External factors include:

- Peer pressure
- Cheap alcohol promotions – specifically the heavy promotion of Shots, but also bar promotions among students
- Loud music inhibiting conversation
- Lack of alternative drinks

Internal factors driving respondents to consume alcohol include;

- Feelings induced by alcohol – specifically relaxation, confidence and an enjoyment of being drunk (under 25yrs)
- Desire to behave in an adult way
- Boredom and lack of other activities

Factors discouraging consumption of alcohol

The most immediately obvious factor to discourage the consumption of alcohol is lack of money. However, strategies to overcome this, such as drinking cheap alcohol in home before going out, mean that while the amount of money taken out does act as a regulator, lack of money is not as significant a control mechanism as may be initially suspected.

Secondary controls regarding the consumption of alcohol then come into play and these include:

- Awareness of commitments to work and family
- Safety – the need to get home safely, safety of peers, avoidance of aggression and violence
- Avoidance of a hangover – a primary inhibiting factor among females with children
- Presence of partners – male or female
- Driving

Moderation opportunities

Throughout this report there has been one common thread. Respondents, who were recruited on the basis of their levels of alcohol consumption, do not view their drinking as a problem. Focus is almost entirely on avoiding the

short-term ill effects (a hangover) and enjoying the feelings of confidence, relaxation and sociability that drinking alcohol affords.

Therefore, as a general conclusion, it is suggested that Kirklees Partnership consider a series of measures that will moderate current drinking habits, rather than immediately eliminate them.

Areas for consideration by Kirklees Partnership break into 9 key areas.

- Education – specifically the need to educate parents how to cope with their children’s introduction to alcohol, with specific emphasis on their status as role models.
- Communication – a need for more realistic and hard hitting messages about the consequences of exceeding Government recommendations, possibly via a medical route and with the use of images. Also exploration of how to make the concept of units more tangible and relevant to everyday lives.
- Increasing the feasibility of family activities by forming partnerships with local sporting bodies for subsidised family tickets to sporting events, subsidising travel and entrance fees to events further afield. Providing opportunities for families to learn together – e.g. computer courses where parents and children to attend alongside each other
- Price rises per se were felt not to be an effective means to encouraging moderation. However, selective price increases on stronger drinks may be one way forward. Also the banning of Shot promotion would have a significant impact on the ease and accessibility of achieving extreme drunkenness among the under 25’s.
- Encouraging consistent co-operation from On Licence premises - including monitoring the entire establishment, better bar staff training and inter-premise liaison
- Offering a wider range of soft drinks – served differently and more imaginatively; smaller measures for wine and lagers
- Introduction of alternative venues – including late night opening/safe places to meet, adding a sense of occasion, safe and subsidised travel, park regeneration. Linked with this is the encouragement and promotion of special events, which offer an alternative source of excitement negating the need for alcohol
- Rethinking of the role of shopping malls after traditional shopping hours
- Encouraging greater participation in sport and exercise for males and females. This requires provision and access to appropriate facilities, and access to same, together with promotion of opportunities. This can be further backed up with links with organisations such as the Youth Sport Trust and the extended schools programme

1. Background And Context

In the year to January 2008, retail auditors AC Nielsen calculated the UK alcoholic drinks market at £34 billion (Total Liquor Sales), or £672 per adult over the course of the year. Whilst the On Licence trade is in long term decline, both in value (-2%) and volume (-7%), the Off Licence trade recorded growth in both volume (+3%) and value (+4%). Much of this growth is attributed to supermarkets, where alcohol has been aggressively price-promoted. Vodka dominates the total spirits market and is showing volume and value growth overall.

It is well-documented that sustained or excessive consumption of alcohol can have a serious effect on health, both mental and physical, with consequent impact on individual welfare, as well as NHS resources and the economy, through loss of work days.

There has been an increase nationally in the proportion of the public consuming alcohol beyond safe levels. This trend has also been witnessed in the Kirklees area (evidenced through the CLIK survey). Kirklees Partnership wishes to take action and develop a strategy to influence and change patterns of local alcohol-related behaviour.

Previous research (Mintel) has identified a number of factors which contribute to increasing high consumption of alcohol

- Availability of cheap products
- Increasing mental health issues
- Acceptability of home drinking

The Mintel research included a segmentation identifying four key consumer clusters:

- Calm and Composed (31% survey respondents)
- Health Concerned (22%)
- Regular Drinkers (28%)
- Quantity over Quality (19%)

The last of these groups is of particular concern, and was the only set of customers that agreed with the statement '*drinking alcohol is more about how much I drink, rather than what I drink.*'

This group includes both sexes (bias towards males), and is weighted towards less affluent C2DE consumers. There is also a high proportion of those who are single and not working (e.g. students or unemployed).

Nearly a third of consumers from the Quantity over Quality group are frequent smokers.

2. Research Objectives

This research assesses the role that alcohol plays in the lives of those who routinely consume higher amounts of alcohol than recommended by the Government's 'safe drinking' guidelines.

It seeks to understand the underlying motivators and values that lie behind binge drinking, and to identify whether it is possible, and how, to:

- change the 'lead-in' patterns of behaviour that lead to excessive drinking
- develop products or services which can deliver and satisfy the same needs that are currently met by excessive drinking

The specific objectives set out for the research were as follows:

- to understand the context of alcohol within patterns of social behaviour
- to identify the perceived benefits from alcohol consumption – functional returns, emotional and psychological benefits
- to examine the push factors which increase level/frequency of drinking
- to test awareness of health issues around alcohol
- to explore potential motivators towards a more healthy lifestyle, and possible barriers to change
- to identify possible ways to engineer social behaviour change, which will lead to lower alcohol consumption

3. Methodology

Previous research had enabled Kirklees Partnership to identify groups who were considered at risk from harmful or hazardous drinking.

The research approach involved a combination of group discussions and depth interviews from these target markets. These consisted of two groups with each of the following eight segments. For the older age ranges, one of the two groups was made up of smokers and one was made up of non-smokers.

1. ABC1, 25-40, female, income £25K+
2. ABC1, 25-40, male, income £25K+
3. C2DE, 25-40, male, income < £25K
4. C2DE, 25-40, female, income < £25K
5. Students, 18-24, male
6. Students, 18-24, female
7. Young persons, 16-18, male
8. Young persons, 16-18, female

The group approach was complemented by 4 depth interviews conducted with each of the first six of the above groups. The depth environment provided us with an opportunity to explore areas about first experiences of alcohol more fully, and to probe in detail on levels of concern about health risks.

4. Value of Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) good health is not merely the absence of disease; it is also a reflection of the social and mental well-being of people in a community. Thus, to achieve the WHO goal of providing health for all, improvements in a community should aim not simply to reduce disease, but also to reduce social tensions and mental ill-health to acceptable levels. *Source: www.who.int*

There was predictable endorsement of the idea that good health was something that was important but there was substantial variation in the way in which people judged their own standard of health, and also in the extent to which people were prepared to modify their own lifestyles to achieve it.

Reactions were mixed when respondents were asked if they regarded themselves as healthy.

Respondents aged 16-24yrs were least likely to claim to look after their health or be aware of health issues. Typically they felt that they were too young to be concerned about their health, it was something that they will worry about later.

“I think we’re a bit young to be worrying about health”
(Female, 16-18)

Students were similarly as confident about health as the 16-18yr olds. There is no difference between males and females in these younger age range groups in how they actively strive for better health (as opposed to being fitter by default – by playing football etc).

Among the older respondents there was a mixed reaction to the concept of good health. The ‘invincibility’ evident among those under 25 years was also seen within this group, although there were isolated signs of increasing awareness of mortality with age.

“I’m 26 years of age and I’m not going to start worrying about what drink is going to do to me when I’m 60”
(Male 25-40)

There was still generally a feeling that

- There would be warning symptoms to alert them to health problems
- They would act if told to by a GP
- There would be time to rectify any damage

Most respondents expect that after warnings they would just have to reduce alcohol intake. Few expected that they would have to give up alcohol altogether, but if that were the case, nobody felt that this would be unattainable and that giving up would cause a problem to them.

Women who have young families were highly aware of the need to be healthy – that is eat healthily and be physically well enough to be able to care for their children. ABC1 females in Huddersfield put a very definite high price on this, while C2DE females in Cleckheaton were more mixed in their approach and were less likely to consider themselves healthy, while still placing emphasis on the fact that they wanted their children to be healthy.

Older males who played sport also placed high value on being healthy, in order that they could continue to play sport and not be embarrassed by a lack of fitness.

In contrast to the wide definition of 'Good Health' of the WHO, the perspectives of Kirklees drinkers are more closely aligned with defining 'good health' as a lack of 'ill health'. It therefore means being able to do the things you want, or have, to do in daily life

- be that get up every morning and look after a toddler
- or play five-a-side football three times a week.

"If I can get across the road without being out of breath, I reckon I'm OK"
(Male 25-40)

There was little evidence of health meaning extreme athleticism or increasing achievement in sport beyond current levels.

Among the female C2DE group in Cleckheaton over half of the group were substantially overweight but did not find this an issue, as long as they could carry out their level of everyday activity adequately. Hobbies among this group were largely sedentary, doing puzzle books or playing computer games.

Key top-of-mind factors perceived to have a positive impact on health, across all groups, were:

- o Healthy eating – specifically there was high awareness of takeaway food as unhealthy (being high in calories and the impact for weight watchers) and more general issues about quality of the content among males.
- o Exercise – going to the gym, playing football with peers, walking

Smoking was agreed to be the primary negative factor on health, and awareness of the dangers of smoking was high. Messages about the impact of smoking on health have high credibility, primarily because they are supported by the smoker's own tangible experiences, such as shortness of breath when running.

Few respondents identified alcohol consumption spontaneously as a health issue, although it was acknowledged, albeit reluctantly, when prompted. Males aged 25-40 years who enjoyed sport were aware of too much drinking not being consistent with maintaining their fitness levels, but did little to modify their behaviour as a result.

Credibility of Government recommendations for sensible alcohol consumption was much lower. Other than a conceptual awareness of potential (unspecified) damage to the liver in the long term, respondents did not

consider their level of alcohol consumption harmful. There was no acknowledgement of risk to health from drinking from any respondent. This suggests that Government and other sensible drinking campaigns are not making any dent at all in drinker's consciousness.

The reasons for this are threefold

- Respondents do not see their drinking levels as dangerous
- They regard the Government limits for sensible drinking as ridiculously low and disregard them. In addition they do not clearly understand or believe what the long-term effects of exceeding Government levels are.
- They see the damage from alcohol consumption only in the short-term, the impact the next morning, and do not consider that they are at risk of any long-term effects.

“Drinking doesn't really do as much [long-term damage] as smoking; you just feel rough the next day” (Male 16-18)

“You don't think about the risks to you in 20 or 30 years – that's too far off to consider” (Female Student)

“I don't think it's too serious. I know it does some damage to me, but basically if I cut down a lot now, the liver can repair itself” (Male Student)

“Eventually it's going to catch up.” (Moderator: *How long is 'eventually'?*) *Twenty, thirty years”* (Male Student)

4.1 Perceived Dangers To Health From Alcohol

Perhaps reflecting the age profile of the sample (18-40 years), the primary concern about the negative effects on health from alcohol was almost exclusively the short-term effect and included immediate symptoms (vomiting, falling over) and subsequent hangovers, rather than longer-term damage.

Once the immediate hangover has passed there is no sense that this will have had any serious effect on their body.

There was also feeling from many of the younger groups (male and female) that the after-effects were part and parcel of the drinking experience. For those aged 16-18 years and some students, hangovers were seen as an experience to be shared (bonding) and joked about.

The older women, by contrast, were the group who actively tried to avoid hangovers as they would otherwise not be able to cope with the requirements on them (home and work) the next day.

Older males who worked (and students who worked/studied) the next day were able to schedule their heaviest drinking sessions to times when they had no commitments the next day.

"I'll have a good session on Saturday, cos I know I can sleep though on Sunday"
(Male 25-40)

When asked to discuss the potential health problems that alcohol could cause there was general awareness across all groups of

- Acute alcohol poisoning leading to death
- Liver damage

However, these were very much seen as issues affecting other people rather than them, personally.

Liver damage was seen as a long-term issue, and, moreover,

- It was not something which would affect them in any case
- It would take years to develop
- There would be a time later to modify behaviour, without having suffered irreparable harm

"There are lots of people who drink for years and don't have any problems, so I don't see any reason to worry"
(Male, 16-18)

"People have been drinking for hundreds of years haven't they, and most people are OK"
(Male 25-40)

A key factor in not taking seriously the health threat appears to be the drinker's (stated) certainty that they would be able to modify their behaviour before, or if, any serious damage was threatened. There is a strong assumption that alcohol is a controllable drug.

In support of this, older respondents (25 – 40 years) felt that they had their drinking under control. Typically, they:

- o perceived they were alert to physical symptoms which warned them when they had had enough

"I try and be as sensible as possible. Like if I feel ill, then I'll stop - but I try not let it get to that point. So I don't think I am doing myself that much long-term damage"
(Male 25-40)

- o had reduced their repertoire of drinks (avoiding mixing different drinks)
- o felt problem drinking must mean drinking every day

"Because I don't drink every day, I think I could cut down"
(Female, 25-40)

- o were conscious of family and work commitments
- o were motivated by the known impact on the following day of drinking too much

"I don't think that it is hard for me to cut down. I'm aware of all the health dangers and what limits I should stick to. Sometimes alcohol can

be good for you. Red wine can be good for your heart, good for your skin and good for your blood pressure. But, if you drink too much obviously it rots your liver. I just think 'I don't want it to rot my liver' and I stop. I have strong will-power. It's all in the mind!"

(Male, 25-40)

4.2 Smoking

Among smokers around half classified their smoking as 'social' – to them this meant having under 5 cigarettes a day when on their own but smoking more heavily when out with friends. Drinking alcohol was closely associated with increased tendency to smoke among those predisposed to smoking at all. All of those who smoked felt that it impacted their health now, or would impact in the future. Males were most likely to recognise a tangible effect on their fitness.

"It's just like walking up hills and stuff, by the time you get to the top you're knackered"

(Male, 16-18)

"I used to be able to run for miles and now I can't"

(Male, 16-18)

Young females were much less likely to openly identify an impact on their health from smoking – this is possibly due to the low incidence of physical activity among the 16-18 year old girls. As a group they were not necessarily smoking less than the young males.

Labelling on cigarettes was something taken for granted and on its own was not perceived to offer a particular disincentive to smoke.

"The writing doesn't do much - because you look at that and you know it already. You don't even look at your pack really now, you don't even notice it"

(Male, 16-18)



The smoking ban in pubs and clubs did not appear to deter 16-24 year old smokers from going out to socialise, nor from smoking generally.

"[I smoke] about the same because you down it [your drink], don't you... before you go out for your cig. And then you go and buy another drink"

(Female, 16-18)

Whilst the general population may consider smoking to be far less of a 'social habit' than it once was, *group belonging* remains a core driver for smoking. One ex-smoker (a student) claimed to have started smoking again since the smoking ban was introduced. The fear of being left out of the social group was greater than the known threat to health from cigarettes.

Where the smoking ban is having an impact is among the 25-40 year old smoking respondents. For these smokers a cigarette had become part of the drinking experience and the inconvenience of not being able to smoke in the pub had led many to reduce their visits to the pub, and to increase levels of drinking at home. Alcohol has a strong enough role in their lives for them to

change their social behaviour in order to accommodate drinking and smoking as one activity.

"I mainly drink at home now because of the smoking ban"
(Female, 25-40)

"Sometimes I drink out, but I mainly drink at home now because of the smoking ban. Before the smoking ban, I'd just go out a lot but you can't really enjoy yourself when you can't smoke. You have to go outside and it's cold!"
(Female, 25-40)

Only one respondent admitted to reducing his smoking as a result of the smoking ban in pubs.

For females ABC1 aged 25-40 years with families, their attitudes to smoking corresponded to more positive general attitudes to health and diet.

Those females who did smoke and had children consciously kept their children away from their smoking habit, either by smoking outside or in the kitchen away from children.

Across both genders, a high proportion of those who smoked wanted to cut down at some point in the future. They were not actively seeking ways of cutting down now.

4.3 Diet

The majority of the 16-18 year old respondents lived at home with their parents. Consequently, their regular main-meal diet was still controlled to some extent.

Food intake and healthy diet for this group is less regulated at the weekend, which is when high levels of alcohol consumption are most likely to take place.

"... just wake up and have breakfast and then you drink all day don't you? And then you don't eat again until like 4 in the morning"
(Male, 16-18)

Chips, kebabs and takeaways are regularly eaten on a night out, particularly at the end of the evening.

"If I'm, like, morbidly obese then I'd be bothered, but I'm not"
(Male, 16-18)

The young women were more aware than the males of the need to drink water. Aside from this, though, there was little evidence of this age group taking active involvement in ensuring their diet was healthy.

There was some suggestion that eating less food in order to get drunk more quickly and cheaply has high appeal among the 16-18 year olds. Most respondents were aware of this (males and females) and typically found it amusing rather than a cause for concern.

“I don’t eat before I go out just because it makes it cheaper”
(Female, 16-18)

This finding was confined to young respondents and was not evident among those aged 25-40 years.

Those with young families appeared the most conscious of a healthy diet (both male and female respondents). The ‘5 a day message’ was mentioned frequently.



However, for some, the cost of following healthy eating advice was a far higher (often unaffordable) shopping bill.

“Diet is very important. I always try to get my 5 a day of fruit and veg. Even if I eat 20 packets of crisps, I will always try to eat ‘5 a day’. So at least I’m doing one thing. But, there’s always new stuff that’s coming out: Omega 3! What the blooming hell is that? I’m unemployed at the moment and I try to eat right but if you go for this low cholesterol margarine it’s, like, £6 a tub! I mean £6 for some margarine!”
(Male, 25-40)

4.4 Exercise

16-25 years

Male respondents were more likely to undertake formal physical exercise. For the younger age range football was very dominant, but complemented by a range of other team sports.

Male students and males aged 16-18 years were more likely to engage in regular sport or exercise than young females, correlating with recorded drop-out rates of girls (14yrs+) from physical education.

Barriers to taking more formal exercise can be classified into three areas (both genders).

Motivation:

- 16-18 year olds were very keen to justify why they couldn't expand their repertoire of activity; typically citing money, travel and time (particularly among those who had just started work)
- Going for a drink scores high as an alternative activity. It is easy, requires less energy, and is a socially-bonding experience with friends

- N.B. Motivation to improve fitness seemed particularly poor among the Cleckheaton groups

“I’d like to be fitter but I can’t really be arsed” (Male 16-18)

Opportunity:

- The young females were more likely to say lack of opportunity generally was the issue
- Young males in Cleckheaton felt their opportunities were limited because of few local facilities. The only recreation area was the park which did not have a modern hardcourt. There was the feeling that all exercise therefore required travel and cash.
- Within the Huddersfield group of young females, there was a willingness in principle to play some team sports. However, unlike the young men (who confidently felt that they could construct a five-a-side team, play pool etc.), the young women lacked confidence and knowledge of where to go and what to do

“With lads, they play football outside school as well from when they were younger. But when you’re at school and you do sports, like I used to play netball at school, and then once you leave there’s nobody does anything outside of school, that’s with your mates anyway. So it’s a bit like there’s nothing else to do apart from go and get drunk”
(Female 16-18)

- Better communication of local opportunities could help

“The sports centre is not very well promoted. I don’t have a clue what goes on down there” (Female, 16-18)

- Much of the sport was informal activity – general kick about or matches between friends, rather than as part of particular clubs, with regular commitments.

Cost:

- Whether actual or perceived, cost was key in defining accessible activities for 16-18 year olds. Many felt that lack of money was a barrier to involvement, particularly to formal physical activity

“I’m always going to start going to the gym! I just never get round to doing it, can’t afford it” (Male, 16-18)

“I used to play badminton down there [sports centre], but it’s so expensive” (Female, 16-18)

25-40 years

There was a mixed reaction to the concept of exercise among the 25-40 age groups.

For women, socio-economic group had a significant impact on attitudes to exercise:

- ABC1 women were more likely to build in some kind of exercise (be it formal – e.g. classes, gym, fitness DVD; or informal – e.g. walking kids to school)
- C2DE women were generally less likely to exercise, with puzzle books, TV and computer games their key leisure pursuits.

The ABC1 women were more open to extending any exercise programmes they did currently into something through some form of club, as this would provide another area of social contact (as well as the exercise benefits).

Other women (especially C2DEs) cited key barriers to exercise as time, family commitments, and other health issues. As they were not ill, and had not been instructed (e.g. by a GP) to adopt any exercise, then they did not feel motivated as individuals to change. There were some concerns about weight gain, and an awareness of the contributory effect of alcohol, but despite wanting to look better, they again had low motivation to do anything tangible about it.

Among the males of all socio-demographic groups, there was much more variety in the types and levels of activities undertaken, ranging from mountain biking, to football, to the gym. However, this did not correlate with a more considered approach to health generally, since smoking and alcohol consumption levels remained high.

Men also showed relatively high levels of concern for their physique (e.g. putting on weight/developing a beer belly). For many men, exercise is a means of counteracting these physical changes, whilst allowing continued pursuit of their drinking/smoking lifestyle.

5. Development of a binge drinking culture

5.1 First Drinking Experiences

Introductions to alcohol were relatively similar across groups. First experiences were typically:

- with family
- at around 10-14 years old
- with a meal or at a celebration
- sipping parents' drinks or introduction by an older sibling

"I'd probably say about 11, like having a few drinks when you're on holiday with your family, or at family do's" (Female, 16-18)

These patterns were very much controlled and responsible, but do not lead to a controlled and responsible attitude later. They are not seen as the 'real introduction' to drinking, which comes later with peers.

Across all the age groups, respondents gave examples of their parents' drinking habits. Consciously or unconsciously, parents and other influential adults (e.g. parents' friends, relatives) play a significant part in setting a model for their children's alcohol 'journey'.

"My dad's not a heavy drinker but I have always seen him drinking"
(Male, 25-40)

"My mum can drink 8 cans of bitter in one night and not get drunk. I say, 'Mum aren't you drunk?' and she's like, 'No. I'm 47 and I've been drinking for 27 years'"
(Male, 25-40)

"They [my parents] will go out and have a few and my Dad will have a few tinnies at home, so it's just normal isn't it?"
(Male 16-18)

The research identified a similar peak in drinking habits to that found in research conducted in the US in the 1990s. There, research showed that binge drinking is 'normative' during the progression from adolescence to young adulthood (*Schulenberg et al, 1994*), and that towards the end of the transition period to adulthood, drinking levels typically reduce.

In this research for Kirklees, the 16-18 year olds were the most likely to talk about routinely getting extremely drunk and it appears that there is a significant element of a 'rite of passage'.



The media paints a picture of a 'binge drinking' culture with worsening levels of uncontrolled alcohol consumption. This research suggests strongly that young people (students and the under 25s) do perceive drinking alcohol as intrinsic to social culture in Britain today:

"I think it is so ingrained in public consciousness now that the pub is the place to go and socialise really. People have been drinking for thousands of years, it's difficult to stop"

(Male student)

It is debatable if this 'drinking culture' is in itself different to previous generations. Whether the undoubted high level of binge drinking amongst the young is indicative of the development of a nation of alcohol-dependent adults is also a moot point, although this research does suggest that many over 25s would, in official Government guidelines terms, be classified as both excessive and binge drinkers.

What is clear, though, is that the nature of preferred alcoholic drinks amongst the young has changed substantially in recent years. The impact of this on behaviour is explored in the next section.

5.2 Under-Age Drinking Out Of Home

After the controlled drinking in home situations, there is also a rite of passage mentioned by the majority of respondents, which involves experiencing alcohol with friends. This was mentioned by 80-90% of respondents and equally by the older adults as well as youths and students, suggesting it is a long established practise.

There were a few exceptions – including those where social lives were based more on family than friends, and one or two with families with strong religious convictions.

The main 'out of home' experiences typically take place between 13 and 15 years old. In Cleckheaton, West End and Memorial Parks were named as key locations; alternatively, simply in the street (alleys close to blocks etc). Drinking alcohol is seen as cool, aspirational and a laugh: it provides an escape from a parentally-controlled environment and is a way of sharing experiences with peers and being 'grown up'.

"When you are that age... you're starting to feel more grown up aren't you? When you're 14/15 you want your own independence and stuff. So like you want to go out"

(Female, 16-18)

"I felt really free and a bit naughty. It was like 'I shouldn't be doing this!'"

(Male, 25-40)

"I was drinking for different reasons then. I was at my mate's house and I guess that there was a bit of rebelliousness involved being under-age"
(Male, 25-40)

Means of getting hold of alcohol are occasionally through parents:

- willingly/knowingly (in a few isolated occasions) buying for their children from the off-licence or supermarket
- unwittingly, via the drinks cupboard at home

or more commonly through an older sibling or through friends in the group who were older, or looked older.

Youths were also aware of some stores which would sell alcohol to underage drinkers.

"People that were old enough would go and get them [alcopops]. I'd ask someone to go to the Co-op and get a packet of cigs as well"
(Female, 16-18)

The key factors driving the choice of drinks within this context are

- price
- taste
- availability



For males there was typically a mix between

- cider
- wine
- alcopops

For the older respondents, (25-40 years) MD 20/20 (orange) and cider were mentioned as the main drinks (because they were cheap and accessible).



For the under 25 year olds, alcopops and white cider play a key role in the early days of alcohol consumption. This is largely driven by the sweetness (pleasant taste), but also price.

"They [alcopops] were cheaper. Because at the time I didn't have a job and any money I was getting I was skimming off the top from my mum's purse or just getting it from anywhere, saving up dinner money"
(Male Student)

Where spirits could be obtained from home, these were mixed with fruit juice or coke/lemonade to provide an appropriately sweet taste.

From around 15 years of age, many respondents claimed they were able to gain access to pubs and clubs. These are desirable places to be:

- a place to meet friends
- out of the home
- (pre-smoking ban) a place to smoke (for some)

Overall there is an overwhelming sense of a desire to be independent and appear grown up and this drives the desire to be in pubs/clubs. Visiting a pub offers the chance to stay out late, drink, smoke (take risks) in an 'adult' place.

"Music playing; we were playing darts and playing pool. It was a gateway into a lifestyle that appealed to me; I was like 'Oh yes! I might be underage but I like this'. I was smoking as well"

(Male, 25-40)

Young persons aged 16-18 years (especially males) tended to use pubs and clubs occasionally for playing pool (occasionally darts). There was a feeling that in these environments they would drink less.

"You don't have too many, or you'll draw attention to yourself"

(Male 16-18)

Awareness of a need for ID (genuine or fake) was high among the under 25s. There was evidence that bars in Huddersfield town centre have recently become much stricter in terms of demanding ID:

"Town is definitely a lot harder to get into, unless you've got someone else's ID, which is the next issue really I suppose"

(Female, 16-18)

"When I see younger people in pubs now, it's like they'll get them straight out, they won't serve them. We used to be in when we were 14,15; we used to be getting drunk down at the Queen's, for example"

(Female, 16-18)

However, rules on ID were perceived to be more lax in surrounding areas. There was a perception (voiced by the males, and corroborated by some of the females) that requests for ID is more lax for young women than for young men, with door staff the key control on access:

"Girls can get ID off one of their mates like who's older, who looks like them and acts like them. But lads can't because you've got to look exactly like them"

(Male, 16-18)

"If one [male] hadn't ID then they'd kick them out; a group of girls with their chests and their legs out get straight in" (Male student)

"I lent my driver's licence to someone a couple of weeks ago and they got it taken off them and I had to get it back"

(Female, 16-18)

There is mixed evidence of a lack of control on the purchase of alcohol once access has been gained. Typically the busier and more anonymous the bar, the easier it is for underage drinkers to openly consume alcohol.

“If you can’t get a pint, you get someone else to buy it for you”
(Male, 16-18)

“Once you’re in, they’re not bothered” (Male, 16-18)

5.3 Reasons For Underage Alcohol Consumption

There are a number of separate factors which are encouraging the consumption of alcohol by the 16-18 year olds.

Predominant among these, and very much top of mind, is **boredom**. There is felt to be:

- A lack of alternative activities that are of interest
- Lack of money to pay for the alternatives
- Issues regarding travel to get to the alternatives

We will explore attitudes to boredom and other activities shortly.

The second significant factor prompting underage consumption of alcohol is that of **expectation**.

Those with siblings were aware that this was the ‘normal’ way that people acted and their siblings also encouraged them to follow (by buying alcohol etc).

The anecdotal reports on the levels of alcohol consumed and the associated fun times are instrumental in setting the norms that this age band expect to follow.

“My brother would go and buy us some cans. He used to go out when he was my age and used to get pissed, but now he’s down the pub”
(Male 16-18)

Linked to expectation, a further factor is the perception that alcohol is a mark of **coming of age and independence**. It is a sign that one is no longer a child, and can not be treated as a child. The youths are making an independent (therefore adult) decision on what they want to do and are consciously choosing something that is seen as being the mark of an older age group.

Another factor mentioned across all youth groups is **sexual interaction**. While not all the drinking occasions by any means are within mixed groups, there is a strong conviction that alcohol makes it easier to talk to the opposite sex (gives more confidence).

This actually involves two separate components – the opportunity for sexual

contact, and the perception that alcohol makes these contacts more positive, by reducing inhibitions.

There is no sense of moderation to the amount of alcohol which will work in a positive way – basically there is a feeling for the youths (male and female) that the more they have, the better sexual encounters will be.

A final factor to be considered is **peer group pressure**. The young males and females both were involved often with large groups, and there was a tendency for regularity and conformity in their activities.

“We’ll all go round to play on his Xbox and have a few tinnies...”
(Male, 16-18)

Once regular alcohol consumption is an established group activity, none of the participants want to break the group mould. The environment is such that if one member chose not to be involved, then they would feel uncomfortable (and would be made to feel uncomfortable).

While this peer pressure presents problems, equally it does lead to a potential opportunity - if the group activity/activity of the group leaders can be modified/substituted, there will be a strong tendency to follow.

“If you were the one not drinking you’d feel a bit odd – you’d all feel a bit odd”
(Male, 16-18)

Boredom And Activities

The 16-18 year old young women in Cleckheaton were particularly likely to highlight lack of money as a reason for drinking. However, note that ‘lack of money’ is not a lack in absolute terms: it is a question of priority and perceived return, as illustrated in the exchange below.

“... there’s not a lot of things around here ...there isn’t anything”
(Female, 16-18)

“There’s a cinema, but it’s £7 to go....you could get pissed on a £7 bottle of vodka”
(Female, 16-18)

When probed further, the same group of girls admitted that they would often spend more money drinking than it would cost them to participate in other activities, once they had started drinking. This suggests that there is no simple solution to limiting alcohol consumption by providing cheap or free alternative activities.

There is evidence of a gender difference in terms of development of other activities:

- 16-18 year old males were more likely to express a range of interests, including:
 - football, Xbox, computing generally, going to the gym, playing pool, other sporting activities
- however, the 16-18 year old females appeared to rely very heavily just on shopping or going into town with friends for their entertainment, with no real evidence of 'hobbies' as such
 - consequently, alcohol was 'filling' a key function in providing amusement and social interaction

In terms of social venues, we asked specifically about Youth Clubs, but these were not seriously considered and have short-term attraction because they:

- are not open frequently enough
- close too early
- do not provide enough stimulus
- provided an environment which was overly controlled and safe

The 16-18 year olds exhibited a keen desire to be out of the house, and a Youth Club opening once or twice a week until 9pm does not satisfy this need.

"It's in Kirkburton - there's a youth club, but it's in a Salvation Army place.... all they've got is a kitchen and a hall with a TV and a Playstation and there's nothing else to do" (Male, 16-18)

Both sports centres and youth services were broadly dismissed.

"They [adult youth leaders] always say they're gonna do it [organise activities such as paintballing]... and then they organise it with room for one person from each area and not everyone can go, you get left out" (Male, 16-18)

6. Current Drinking Behaviour

6.1 Drinking Occasions

All the groups exhibited habitual behaviour in terms of alcohol consumption – either drinking every day after work, every night after the children have gone to bed or twice or three times a week (usually including Friday and Saturday) with friends.

The young people (under 25 years) mixed regularly with friends but their alcohol consumption was constrained by the location. Some parents were known to be stricter on alcohol than others, with a range – some allowing a can or two, and some letting their children drink freely, or equally not being present.

Groups of those under 25 years moved from one location on one night to another location (or series of locations) on another night – picking the venue according to the 'heaviness' of the session. Added to this, house parties were a separate source for high consumption levels –

“You’ll drink anything that’s going!” (Male Student)

For those aged under 25 years big nights out are predictably Friday and Saturday nights, with students also seeing Wednesday as a central night in their drinking calendar. Cheap prices for students are the key pull on Student Nights. There is a solid understanding of which venues have cheap offers on which nights, and there is some variation in the nights which drinkers capitalise on.

“If you want you can go out every night and find cheap drink and get pissed” (Male Student)

Those over 25 years are more likely to balance their drinking, and to drink in home more regularly and limit nights out to the weekend. ABC1 women with families felt that they typically drank more on holiday, away from the stresses of normal family activities and responsibilities.

The smoking ban had affected the drinking patterns of the over 25 year old smokers considerably. The balance for some had shifted to more mid week drinking at home with pubs used more heavily at the weekend. The key aspects driving this were comfort and cost but also (predominately among the older males) a recognition that instead of standing in the cold and wet outside a pub they could be enjoying state of the art in-home entertainment systems (42” TV screens, X Box, Pool or Table Football) in their own front rooms.

“Why go to the pub and pay so much and then have to stand outside” (Male 25-40)

Key times for all for alcohol consumption were national holidays, family and friends' celebrations and the summer (BBQs and more socialising generally).

6.2 Patterns of Alcohol Consumption

There are clear differences across the age and socio-economic groups in terms of the types of alcoholic drink consumed.

Those under 25 years have a broad repertoire of alcoholic drinks to suit different drinking occasions. For example, for a quiet night with a friend at a local (not Town) pub, they appear to stick to one or two types of drink – typically lager, wine or a vodka mix. However, when going out for a ‘big night out’, typically into Town pubs and clubs, drinking will often start at home with a bottle of wine and then a mix of drinks will be consumed until late into the evening/early morning.

Males talked about moving from lagers/beers to spirits or shots to enable them to consume maximum quantities of alcohol.

“You get bloated when you drink beer all the time...then you go to the WKD...I drink vodka after that”
(Male 16-18)

For females drink types consumed range from lager, through to wine, spirits (frequently vodka based), alcopops and shots.

Among those aged under 25 years there was a tendency to ‘pre-load’ with cheaply purchased alcohol in the home before going out. This was seen as very much part of the preparation process and recognised as a way of getting you ‘on the way’ before having to pay much steeper prices in bars and clubs.

“Well because I live in a house with a certain amount of people I would sort of be doing my hair or whatever with the door open and I’ll be talking to my friends usually across the hall and have a drink, a glass of wine”
(Female Student)

Shots were widely mentioned as an integral part of a ‘big night out’ for the under 25’s. These could be branded shots such as Sourz and Aftershock, or tequila or sambuca or mixes. Shots appeal on a number of levels. Linking back to the first types of alcohol consumed, shots are seen as attractive, funky drinks...

“There’s a club called Baa-Bar in Manchester that do shots for £1 and they have a hundred different shots and you have got them all laid out and they have all got funky names and different colours and stuff, so we’ll usually go there for a shot because they are a quid, it is kind of what you do”
(Female Student)

“They do mix them really well so they are fruity and stuff and are really really nice”
(Female Student)



Shots are also typically mentioned in the context of extreme alcohol consumption, bought to increase drunkenness.

"I think sometimes it doesn't make you as bloated for the girls and they seem to think it gets you drunk faster, which it does because you have like three of them at once"
(Male Student)

"It is mainly because they are quite strong so rather than sit there with a glass of wine or vodka and lemonade you can just shot it. It's got the same effect!"
(Female Student)

Shots have a social role in the sense of providing competition and the feeling of indulging in a group practise.

"...and you have the little competition, there is a competitive element to shots as well, chuck it back fastest, turn your glass upside down etcetera"
(Male Student)

Bars that serve Shots or have Shot nights are widely known. Shots are available for as little as £1 - this is seen as an attractive offer for the under 25's – a way of getting drunk quickly and cheaply.

Drinking is much more carefully self-regulated in terms of the range of alcohol consumed among the older respondents.

Both males and females over 25 years indicated that they typically stuck to certain types of alcohol because they felt happy with what they were used to. Also there was evidence of a taste effect – with some drinks just preferred on a regular basis.

"I tend to stick to one type of drink when I go out. I think vodka is about 40% alcohol. I don't know about other drinks because I tend to stick to vodka based drinks when I go out"
(Female 25-40)

"I drink vodka mixed with water. I just like the taste of it"
(Female 25-40)

"We always start with lager and then a bottle of brandy usually turns up. .. we mix it with cola. We have a pint each and there are about 4 shots in a pint glass"
(Male 25-40)

Females, over 25 years, of all socio-economic groups appear to have adopted the most disciplined approach to the type and amount of alcohol consumed. This correlates with their concern to avoid hangovers. This is in contrast to the younger females whose repertoire of drinks for one drinking occasion, particularly in Cleckheaton, was very wide.

7. Reasons For Drinking

7.1 Perceived Benefits Of Alcohol

While there are key differences in the amount of alcohol consumed and the social context of its consumption, a clear pattern runs through the research in terms of the benefits offered by alcohol.

Positive Benefits
of Alcohol
Consumption



Fig i



Fig ii

One aspect worthy of note is that drinking alcohol is seen as making a switch between normal activity and personal time. The act of having a drink

(regardless of the amount consumed) marks a threshold to switch from one mode to another.

For some, the switch they want is stronger than for others

- a switch from responsibility to lack of responsibility
- a switch from dull and regular, to lively and exciting

“Work’s shit and having a few drinks at the weekend is what you have to look forward to”
(Male 25-40)

What is also noticeable from looking at fig i and fig ii is that while there are many similarities in the appeal of alcohol across the ages there is a stronger link among younger respondents between alcohol and fun. There is also a prominent intention among the young and students (male and female) to get drunk – this is their key goal.

There is an interesting difference in that while there is still an objective to ‘have a lot to drink’, it is not quite the same end game as ‘being drunk’.

For older males, the objectives from a good drinking session are typically:

- to drink a large quantity / for a long time
- to know one has had a lot to drink and be in ‘the zone’
- to be slightly unsteady but not falling over

For older women, the objectives from a good drinking session are typically:

- to forget about everyday worries by dancing and socialising
- to drink enough to have the confidence to act in this way but not suffer effects the morning after

The findings above tie in with those from the Youth Lifestyles Survey 1998/1999 which found that among those aged 18-30 years being sociable, a liking for going to pubs and clubs and relaxation and confidence were perceived as key benefits of alcohol. Combined with this, for those aged 18-24yrs, ‘like getting drunk’ was a key factor in determining behaviour.

“ I always have a drink when I finish work. But if I go out like I do have a good night and I will get really really drunk”
(Male 16-18)

“I’ve just finished term. I have just handed in three assignments and want to go out and get drunk”
(Male Student)

Male respondents under 25 years talk about the desire to get ‘mashed’, or ‘hammered’ as a desirable state. Females too, more typically the 16-18 yr olds rather than students, discussed a desire to get really drunk, as a fun thing to do. The younger respondents, particularly Cleckheaton girls, were also keen to relate stories of extreme drunkenness – including hospitalisation – and this was to some extent a badge of honour. Having been in this condition was not felt to be socially unacceptable or wrong.

When pressed as to the attraction of getting really drunk, respondents under 25 years felt that alcohol makes things more fun...

“Because when you’re drunk you think rubbish ideas are good ideas don’t you? Then you’ll go and do something and you’ll realise you’ve done it but if you’re not drunk you wouldn’t do it. It would just be boring wouldn’t it”
(Male 16-18)

This feeling is not limited to those under 25 years.

“Oh yeah I can go out and drive and not touch a drop. It’s not as much fun but....you just let yourself go. You’re carefree” (Female, 25-40)

“It usually alters my mood more than my actual behaviour. With wine I get more chilled out and with rum and vodka I dance a lot more”
(Male 25-40)

“It brings the best out of you I think until you go past that line. You don’t have to think about everything that you say; you don’t have to think about everything that you do: You can just get up and do it and if you do something stupid you can just say ‘well it’s the booze isn’t it!’”
(Male 25-40)

The majority of respondents interviewed, even those who like to drink at home, mentioned the sociability of alcohol and this was seen as one of the key benefits – providing a fun and relaxed state of mind where inhibitions and worries are forgotten.

Confidence

It was commonly recognised that alcohol gives confidence. This view was particularly prevalent among the 16-18 year old females but, was recognised as part of their youth by ABC1 and C2DE females. When under 25 year old males talked about increased confidence this was primarily in relation to speaking to girls; female respondents mentioned confidence in terms of dancing and socialising generally.

Relaxation

All age groups were quick to identify relaxation as a key benefit of drinking alcohol. Relaxation is typically defined in a general sense by those aged 16-18 years. The concept seems have a slightly deeper meaning among the respondents over 25 years – particularly among female C2DE respondents, in terms of forgetting cares and worries about their families, money and other issues.

“It makes me feel relaxed and makes me forget about my worries for a bit”
(Female 25-40)

“When you drink you just feel like nobody can touch you”
(Female 25-40)

“At home on a night, I have a drink just because it’s that sit down and ...ahhhhh. It’s that relaxation. It makes you feel better”
(Female 25-40)

ABC1 females with children felt that relaxation was defined as the moment they had put the children to bed and could relax in front of the TV with a bottle of wine.

For ABC1 males relaxation and alcohol were also very closely linked.

One key element of the research was aimed at uncovering what people felt they would miss out on if they could not drink. Remembering that all respondents felt in control of their drinking, they felt that the key element missing in their lives would be fun. For the younger women this means taking part in the social rituals of drinking – getting ready to go out, meeting friends, having the confidence to dance and socialise.

Younger males felt that they would miss out on mixing with their mates. The drinking was an integral part of their social structure.

Males and females aged under 25 years could not imagine not being a member of a drinking group.

For the older respondents fun means socialising with friends or partners in a relaxed and carefree manner.

When asked to consider life without alcohol the over 25 years typically said that they could control their drink, would not miss it and choose simply to consume alcohol because they like the taste and feeling. However, even among these groups fun is the key driver of motivation to drink alcohol.

“ I’m not going to sacrifice my social life just for the sake of staying healthy. I would rather go out and have a few drinks than going teetotal and just be bored every time that I go out” (Male 25-40)

7.2 Negative Associations Of Alcohol

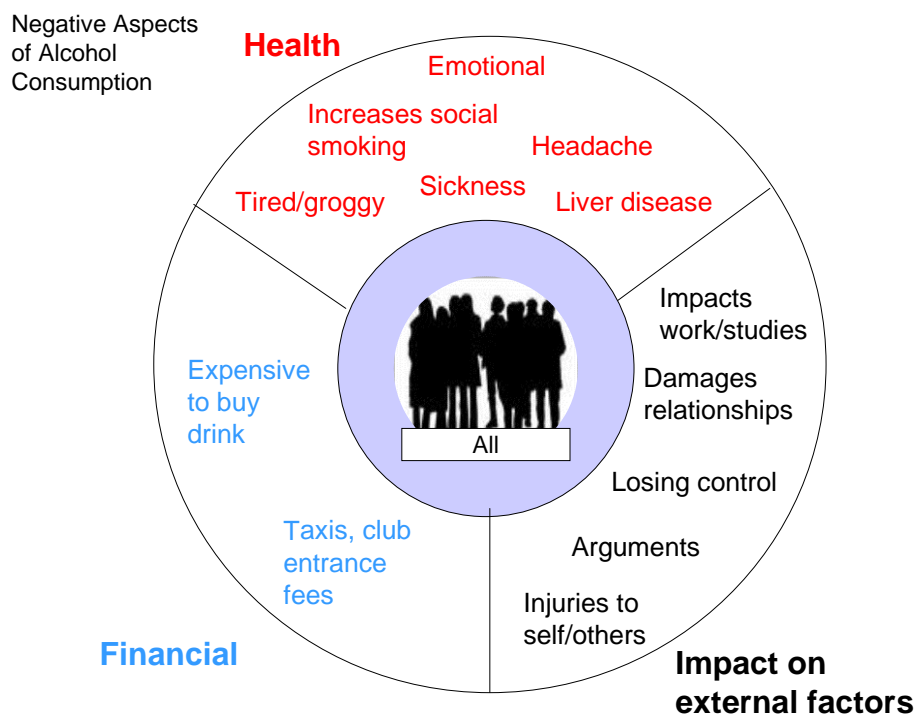


Fig iii

Respondents overwhelmingly focused on the short-term negative effects of alcohol consumption.

Both sexes recognised the fact that there were short-term physical and emotional implications of drinking. Females, particularly those aged 16-18 years, felt that drinking made them say things they didn't mean and made them cry. Physical aspects for females were cited, such as a spinning head and feeling sick.

Alcohol was also known to increase aggression and among C2DE males (over 25 years) most had been involved in some conflict as a result of drinking, either as a provocateur or generally getting involved when someone had initiated trouble.

For all males, the physical aspects were similar to those experienced by females - feeling unsteady and sickness.

Males and females recognised that drinking exaggerated emotions and would have different effects on different people. Impact of alcohol was also influenced by the mood people started drinking in.

The financial impact of drinking was also discussed as a negative and there were comments from older groups on the increasing prices in pubs, and from the younger respondents on the high cost of town centre bars.

However, generally respondents claimed that lack of money would not stop them drinking or going out.

Pricing may however make people

- Change where they drink (more in home rather than the pub, either pre-loading before they go out (younger) or reducing pub visits (older))
- Change what they drink (choosing how to get the same alcohol kick at lower cost)

7.3 Factors That Encourage Drinking

Specific factors identified as helping to increase alcohol consumption are as follows:

1. Feelings

- This refers to feelings of relaxation, increased confidence and loss of inhibitions.
- Positive associations with being drunk (among the young)

2. Routine

- Alcohol is associated with 'me time' (those with young families) - putting the children to bed and drinking a couple of glasses of wine or beer to relax;
- Regular drinks after work
- Days are planned as 'Drinking Days' and looked forward to as such.

3. Social Experience

- Improving social interaction across all age groups, (in conjunction with relaxation) is the predominant reason for drinking among ABC1 adults, drinking at a gathering of friends, often with a meal (ABC1).
- For the younger respondents this appeared particularly important – their need to feel part of a social group meant that they were subject to strong peer pressure.

4. Peer Pressure

- Peer pressure particularly affected the under 25 year olds for whom drunkenness and associated behaviour were the social norm. There is also evidence of peer pressure among older males who feel that they need to maintain a certain level of alcohol consumption in order to retain their place within their social circle.
- For students the expected norms for drinking behaviour are set by the college on arrival – the big emphasis on pub crawls suggests that this is normal activity, and new students look to fit in.
- Pressure at group drinking sessions to keep drinking across all ages, but predominantly within male drinking groups.

"Listen if I turned around in a pub and said 'Listen I've already had 10 units today that's my limit, that's me done for the night' they're going to sit there and go 'oh well piss off then!' You're going to have the mick taken out of you aren't you? You'll become a laughing stock" (Male 25-40)

5. Cheap Alcohol Nights/Promotions

- Primarily appealing to students and other young people. Wednesday night in Huddersfield is Student Night and many respondents mentioned the offers of cheap alcohol prevalent on these nights.
- Two for one offers / doubles for the price of singles / shots for £1 each are all highly appealing offers to those under 25years old.
- There is a high level of promotion/cheap nights directed at students e.g. flyers in student halls

6. Alcohol as a reward

- This theme runs across the different socio-economic groups - the idea that completion of an assignment, a hard day's work or a day looking after the children deserves reward with alcohol.

7. Desire to be 'adult'

- Desire to be out late
- To be outside the parental control
- To do something which is not 'for kids'

8. Boredom / lack of other activities

- This was particularly prevalent among the 16-18 year olds generally who see lack of funds and transport as a barrier to indulging in other social activities.
- There was a general feeling among those in Cleckheaton that all activities were out of town and therefore inaccessible. There was no awareness of any organised sporting or youth activity among respondents interviewed.
- Cost of other activities was seen as too high.

9. Loud music

- The loud music of town bars and clubs was identified as encouraging increased alcohol consumption. One could not chat at these venues because the noise levels prohibited normal conversation. Therefore, the inclination was to drink more.

"Well, the problem with going to bars on Greek St is that the music is very loud so you don't really have much opportunity to talk. So, you drink more!"
(Male 25-40)

10. Lack of alternative drinks

- Soft drinks are seen as too expensive
- Soft drinks are not routinely served in alternative ways – e.g. non-alcoholic cocktails
- Soft drinks sneered at by bar staff and water is not routinely made freely available
- No decent low alcohol alternatives – all seen to taste bad
- Limited range of soft drinks are available

"If you did want to have a different type of drink, everyone would know"
(Female Student)

11. Active promotion of Shots

- Display and use of promotion girls to take shots to tables to encourage consumption
- In some cases, bars providing free shots

12. Active Promotion Of Bars

- Excessive promotion of bars and pub student nights. Few alternative activities equally promoted

“They are the only thing you get leafleted on apart from take-aways”
(Female Student)

8. Factors Discouraging The Consumption Of Alcohol

1. Lack Of Money

Acutely felt by the younger respondents. A typical spend for the under 25's appears to be £20-£25 for a night out. Out of this they pay for alcohol, entrance fees and taxis. The total amount of money a respondent had access to appears to be a much more effective constraint/limiter on the amount of alcohol consumed than any concept of units or sensible drinking.

"You just think about how much money you're gonna spend"
(Male 16-18)

"Usually it's the amount of money that I've got left in my pocket that tells me how much I've drunk on a night. Sometimes we go to clubs that are doing 2 for 1s or every drink is £1 and on those nights I will drink more because there's less of a financial problem; there's more to spread around".

(Male 25-40)

While the lack of money could have been a significant control mechanism, it is important to note that students and those aged 16-18 yrs have already adapted their drinking by 'pre-loading' at home on alcohol bought from the off-licence/supermarket. This also had implications on the patterns of drinking for this group who visited pubs/bars where 'cheap' alcohol could be purchased early in the evening in order to achieve a level of drunkenness before hitting the more expensive and late opening clubs and bars.

"If you go into like some of them, like a big rave or somewhere that's expensive, you go to a little pub or something first and just spend your money in there and then just buy a couple of drinks throughout the night when you're already in the nightclub. So you're already drunk before you go in"

(Male 16-18)

"I don't get drinks in Tokyo it's like everyone's proper pissed by the time they get there so you don't even need to buy any"

(Male 16-18)



**Tokyo's
Huddersfield**

“Usually we don’t go out on a night while 11 o’clock. Mark and I usually split a bottle of vodka between us at home before we go out and then once we’re out on the town we’ll only have two or three. Before we go out we’ll all meet up at Mark’s or mine and we’ll drink there before we go out because we don’t want to have to spend a fortune once we get out”

(Male 25-40)

The total amount of money taken out on a night was used by respondents as a regulator – i.e. many would only take cash so that there was no prospect of being tempted to go to the cash point.

(This restriction was balanced by some (females) who would take cash cards to cover taxi costs to ensure personal safety.

2. Commitments – work, education, family

For women with families the awareness of the needs of their children, either at home, or a need to be taken to school and generally cared for, took precedence over the consumption of alcohol. Many parents (male and female) of the very young claimed not to drink in front of the children.

Older males were very aware of work commitments and would not drink/modify their drinking if they had a commitment the next day.

Students were more likely to feel that they could get away with big nights out during the week. However, there was awareness that this may impact how alert they feel the next day, therefore they would not indulge in heavy drinking before exams and assignments. Those who were working felt that responsibilities the next day discouraged them from a ‘heavy night’ – again thoughts were in the short term. For this reason, not surprisingly, the weekends and bank holidays and holidays generally were seen as prime drinking occasions.

3. The Need To Get Home Safely

The need to get home safely was of primary concern to many of the young people interviewed

“As long as you know you can get home”

(Male 16-18)

This factor did limit the amount of money spent on alcohol because of the need for a taxi

“I always save money for taxis”

(Male 16-18)

4. Aggression And Violence

Aggression and violence were known factors associated with drinking but tended to influence the choice of location rather

than the actual consumption.

Females talked about avoiding rough pubs; young males talked less about avoidance but more on preference for 'known' pubs where patterns of behaviour could be predicted.

Some of the older males even opted to drink at home with friends rather than drink in pubs where there was clear danger of an argument or coming into contact with aggressive drunks.

5. Avoidance Of A Hangover

This was the primary inhibiting factor among females 25-40 years. These respondents claimed that they stopped drinking as soon as they experienced the onset of a slight dizzy feeling or beginning of lack of control. The primary reason for this was to avoid an incapacitating short-term hangover in the morning.

6. Presence Of Partners

- a. Drinking with a girlfriend or partner was seen as an inhibitor in terms of the amount of alcohol consumed. In addition presence of other family members (excluding siblings) was felt to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed. The majority of respondents talked about nights out with friends as the key occasions on which excessive alcohol was consumed.

"Actually usually when I'm in a relationship I would drink a little bit less on a night if I'm out with a girl. If I'm out with my mates I will still drink the same amount, but I will drink a little bit less if I'm out with a girl: I don't want it to affect my performance (got to keep the ladies happy)!"

(Male 25-40)

"I drink more when I go on holidays. I go on girlie holidays and I go with the family. If I go with my family I don't drink that much, but when we go on a girlie holiday we drink far too much!"

(Female 25-40)

- b. Linked to this is the concept of the presence of girls inhibiting consumption among groups of males.

"I suppose when you're with the girls you tend to drink a bit less because they're going on and on and on (talking) and you don't get much chance to drink as much because you're talking a lot more so you don't drink quite as quickly"

(Male 25-40)

"None of the girls were out with us so it was just really a lads' night out. If there are girls in the group does it constrain your drinking? They do to a point. Some of them are fairly heavy drinkers as well but they still can't match up to the lads!"

(Male student)

7. Personal Safety

Females were conscious of being more vulnerable when drunk. However, they still felt that they could safely get 'to drunk' without personal harm.

Males felt less concerned about safety, unless in an unfamiliar/risky area

8. Driving

There was high awareness of issues surrounding drink driving, so this was avoided. Not only was drink driving universally felt to be a bad thing to do, there was also high awareness of the possibility of being over the limit in the morning after a heavy session.

9. Safety Of Peers

In the younger/student groups there was a group mentality looking after all members of the group. 'The Group' includes not just those immediately involved, but also wider responsibility for those on the dance floor.

"If you see someone getting bothered, then you'll group around them and edge the bloke away, or else get one of your male friends to sort them out"

(Female student)

In addition there was discussion among the young respondents about group responsibility – the presence of someone within their social circle who could be relied on to get them home safely.

"There's got to be someone to make sure you get home all right"
(Male student)

9. Parenthood

Impact Of Parenthood On Alcohol Consumption

Children, particularly of primary school age, but also children who still rely on parents for transport in the day and evening are strong limiters on parental consumption of alcohol. Reasons for this include inability to get a suitable babysitter (so parents are driven to drink in-home) and the demands of the children (getting up through the night, early in the morning, or needing lifts in the morning or evening).

“I drink a lot less now than I did before I had my little girl (who’s now 1)...because I’m up all night with her; it just takes up all my time. It’s very demanding”

(Female 25-40)

“My daughter is still dependent [14 years old] so my lifestyle wouldn’t allow me to go out anymore than I do at the moment”

(Female 25-40)

Parents across all socio-demographic groups expressed concern for their children and were keen to stress the healthy diets and life styles they wanted for them.

“My son learns a lot at school about healthy eating. He has healthy dinners at school and stuff like that. He knows to brush his teeth in the morning and to eat a lot of fruit during the day”

(Female 25-40)

While some the male respondents did voice concern over being seen to drink in front of their children, females typically felt that they bore the responsibility for reducing their level of drinking while they had young children.

Communication of messages about alcohol to children

ABC1 females and males discussed the café culture in Europe and felt that this was a healthier way to enjoy drinking and would be a more responsible way to educate children and avoid ‘binge drinking’ at a later age.

A high proportion of respondents talked about tasting their parent’s drink as their first experience of alcohol, and this was felt, among parents to be a sensible step in educating their children about alcohol.

Respondents with older children talked about allowing supervised access to alcohol in the home but, in general, relief was expressed when children did not like the taste of alcohol given at home.

“She [daughter] would never touch a drop. When her friend came she’s allowed wine with a meal at home so I gave them both some and she said ‘that is disgusting!’ And I thought to myself ‘thank God for that!’

(Female 25-40)

"I tell him not to drink. He tells me that he doesn't like the taste of it anyway"

(Female 25-40)

Children are typically tasting wine or beer at home rather than the alcopops and white ciders which are the types of alcohol sampled in the out-of-home environment (as discussed at 5.2), therefore, there is room for increased education among parents (discussed in section 11). There is typically little practical awareness/effort to educate children about the different types of alcohol they might experience and its effects.

10. Knowledge and practicality of safe limits

% ABV

Alcohol by volume is typically recognised in terms of lagers (strong to weak) and spirits – specifically vodka.

When ABV was explained to respondents, there was still little understanding about how increased awareness of this could help moderate drinking. Indeed, a number of respondents felt that this information would be useful to them or others, to help identify stronger alcoholic drinks.

“I don’t know, I think that could be a bit of a double-edged sword. People can look at it and say it is so strong I don’t want it and people are going to look at it and say it is twice as strong as that one I’ll have that then”

(Male student)

“The other day I was in an off-license where I live; they sell Blue Label Smirnoff. Now, in this country in a normal bar it’s Red Label which is 37.5%, but Blue Label is actually 45%. So, I bought a bottle of that just for the hell of it. Did you notice any difference? Yes, it hit me a bit harder, yeah!”

(Male 25-40)

Units

All respondents had heard of the concept of ‘**Units of Alcohol**’ and some had seen information relating to this on the labels of bottles/cans.

Overall the only clear positive understanding of the relevance of the unit’s message is seen in relation to driving. Those who drove completely bought into the idea that they must very carefully count their units when driving or have no alcohol at all (typically females) when driving. There was a clear understanding of the cost of drink driving – loss of life, loss of licence and financial cost.

There was little awareness of the Government recommended limits for sensible drinking. Less than a quarter of those interviewed could do anything other than have a vague guess at recommended limits.

“I think they should make you more aware because I don’t know if everyone else understands it but I don’t really understand it, I don’t think they make it clear to you”

(Female 16-18)

In addition units were felt to be irrelevant with no clear understanding of the implications of exceeding Government recommendations. Specifically there was no understanding of why allowances should be based on ‘per week’, when logic said that having all your drinks at one go was clearly worse.

"I don't know anything about that. I just drink it!"

(Female 25-40)

When the Government's sensible drinking recommendations were disclosed the response was overwhelmingly disbelief.

"No! I shouldn't be drinking that but I do! It probably is a sensible limit that I should try to stick to. But, I don't know anybody who sticks to them, or even thinks about them once they start drinking. When you're drinking it you don't think do you? You just get carried away".

(Female 25-40)

"If that's a sensible limit then I'm really a bit crazy!"

(Male 25-40)

"Over a weekend ten pints isn't a lot to me"

(Male student)

"But like I heard it was something like twenty-six or twenty-eight units a week that can give you serious long term damage and that kind of shocked me because I thought you'd be looking at thirty-five units a week to cause some serious long-term damage, I didn't think it'd be anything that low"

(Male 25-40)

It was also felt that the concept of one unit was vague and indefinable and nobody confessed to counting units on a night out (excluding driving occasions).

The concept of units is clearest in terms of pints or measures of spirits and unclear in terms of alcohol you pour yourself (e.g. wine), even among ABC1 females for whom wine is typically the drink of choice, or mixes, cocktails and shots, typically the drink of choice for those under 25yrs out for a 'big night'.

"Because you have about six and then you always move on to vodka red bull or something, and I don't know how many units that is"

(Male 16-18)

It's official measures in bars, but some of the shots and mixers we will make at home ourselves are a bit stronger. Mark's housemate Anna makes shots that we've nicknamed 'Anna shots' because they're probably triple or quadruple measures"

(Male 25-40)

"No, you don't measure it in units you just carry on and carry on. Especially when you're at home like you'll just pour it, you don't think, 'Oh that's equivalent to a double whatever'"

(Female 16-18)

"I don't really count my units. I drink as much as I feel I want to on that night. It varies wildly depending on what's going on around me, how much money I've got with me"

(Male 25-40)

The lack of understanding about units and perceived mixed messages about safe limits for days or weeks meant that respondents typically extended the time frames in which a set number of units could be safely consumed (talking about their 'quota') and made assumptions based on short-term recovery from excessive drinking rather than having any understanding of long term implications.

"We don't really go out in the week. We turn it on at weekend, it is not as good, it is not as spread out. We probably have our whole quota of units over a weekend, if not more to be honest"

(Male student)

"I don't drink every Saturday so there are probably weeks when I go over, some weeks I stay within the limits, and some weeks I don't go out at all. So, overall, I think over a month that I would be within the recommended limits"

(Female 25-40)

The concept of a safe level of units of alcohol was challenged by respondents. They felt that the effects of alcohol were so different for each person, according to size and metabolism, and for themselves the environment or mood they were in could dramatically alter the effects of alcohol. Therefore the idea of recommended limits or levels seemed impractical.

"What's a sensible limit? I don't know you know; it depends on the person. I suppose it would depend on the person. There are days when I can drink and drink and drink and I feel fine; I'm coherent, I can talk properly, even though I walk with a bit of a stagger. But, there are other times when I have 3 pints and I'm absolutely pissed"

(Male 25-40)

This lack of impact of units as a regulator is also derived from understanding of the implications of what happens if one exceeds the recommended limits. This is in direct contrast to the understanding of the health risks associated with smoking or drink driving.

Liver damage seemed to most respondents, regardless of age, a distant and irrelevant health risk. Those in danger are regarded as the 'tramps', obvious alcoholics – people other than themselves. The caricatures of those who are at risk are too far removed from their lives, or lives of family and friends, to be relevant.

“I don’t think that it has any impact on my health. Obviously, it destroys the lives of a lot of people: It leads to violent behaviour and ruins your liver and skin. For some people it really does control their life”.

(Female 25-40)

Respondents are happy to self-regulate their drinking – this is based upon their own perception of sensible drinking and is very subjective and based upon assessment of short-term risk (a headache in the morning, being sick, not being able to walk home).

“I think I’m a pretty good judge of what limits are appropriate for me. I have my own limits; I don’t need the Government telling me how much I should drink. We get it on the news all the time. Do you listen to it? I hear it but I don’t pay a lot of attention to it because it’s every day. You get stuff like ‘don’t eat too much red meat’ or ‘don’t drink too much red wine’ and then you read in the paper a couple of days later ‘you can drink all the red wine that you want’ so it’s like make your bloody mind up”

(Male 25-40)

“I guess it would only concern me if there were visible signs that alcohol was affecting my work or my relationships with my husband and daughter. I think that I have things under control”

(Female 25-40)

There was a prevailing view that sensible drinking advice is yet another example of interference from the ‘Nanny State’.

“It’s part of your social life I think and if they take that away...they want to stop you doing most things. Now, they’re trying to control the social aspects of your life as well”

(Female 25-40)

The younger respondents were most likely to feel that regulation was irrelevant to them because of their youth, however, there was also evidence of a ‘live for today’ attitude among some of the older respondents.

“You try to do everything right, in terms of being healthy, but then you have to live for the day. Mum was very healthy but she died of cancer, breast cancer, so there’s no sense in denying yourself”

(Female 25-40)

11. Opportunities to Reduce Alcohol Consumption

Throughout this report there has been one common thread. Respondents, who were recruited on the basis of their levels of alcohol consumption, do not view their drinking as a problem in any way. Focus is almost entirely on avoiding the short-term ill effects (a hangover) and enjoying the feelings of confidence, relaxation and sociability that drinking alcohol affords.

When it was suggested that respondents might wish to reduce their level of alcohol consumption this was met with incredulity. It was felt that the focus should be on binge drinkers as characterised on TV who were defined by respondents as being 'out of control' and 'unable to handle it'.

The reactions triggered were

- Why should I stop doing something I enjoy?
- Why ask me (when I am in control); the issue is with those who are out of control
- What you ask is unreasonable – it is the one thing I have to look forward to

A head-on approach directly challenging current drinking levels is likely to be counter productive.

However, there are a range of ways in which the environment could be adjusted to help modify current behaviour with regards to alcohol. Coupled with this there is also scope for longer term action to change opinions, through education to reshape expectations and norms with regard to drinking, and to further communicate health and safety issues.

The combination of these factors can help moderate people's current drinking habits, rather than cause them to step away from alcohol altogether.

Education Programme

Introduction to alcohol

Parents in some cases are introducing their children to alcohol, but this tends to be at an early age, and is separate from subsequent experimentation.

At the time their children are going out unsupervised; few have been told about how to approach alcohol. Some parents are unaware what children are up to, others don't care, and access to alcohol will be available at the weakest link in the chain (i.e. the group will find a way to gain access to drink).

At the time they experiment parental influence is less strong, but siblings and friends are very influential. Their attitudes (as well as their actions in providing alcohol) are key, and they could be a useful channel for information.

However, the prevailing issue – that the level of consumption is seen as normal or safe – means that winning their support to communicate, is unlikely.

Normative Levels

For young persons aged 16-18 yrs normative levels are set by parents, siblings and friends. Their recalled experiences are both visible (what their parents drink at home) and anecdotal (what siblings/friends say they drink). They use this information to judge

- How much they have to drink to be 'normal'
- How much they have to drink to have 'got drunk'

This is the closest they have to safe limits.

The trend towards increased home consumption means that young persons are now more directly aware of parental consumption levels.

Alcohol is part of a 'peer culture', there is some suggestion that levels of consumption are exaggerated, but this impacts on norms and expectations.

Normative levels are important for students, as well as other young people.

The communication to new students tends to promote extremes of behaviour – while there are many student activities which involve no alcoholic drink, there is still high emphasis on pub crawls, bar trips etc with no sense of responsibility. There are few, if any, activities which encourage a moderate approach to alcohol. Therefore recommendations to alter student expectations are;

- Actively promote of real/low norms to students
- Parents to include teenagers in responsible home drinking
- Adults to go to the pub rather than drink at home
- Communication emphasising lower norm levels
- More responsible communications from student bodies

In addition better promotions of other events open to students would be beneficial. For example, student newsletters promoting films, theatre, sports and societies would provide students with a more balanced view of what is on offer. This could link into Kirklees in general, rather than just be college specific.

Risks From Alcohol – Communication

While the focus of the research is on activities to modify behaviour, rather than communications, it is worth noting that some specific messages on alcohol could usefully be promoted.

1. Physical Effects of Alcohol Consumption

The risks to the liver etc are only acknowledged on a superficial level, with the belief that damage only occurs via high levels of consumption, over a period of many years.

Information could be provided on:

- i. How bursts of alcohol can cause permanent damage (from just one session)
- ii. How quickly higher levels of alcohol can cause damage
- iii. How damage cannot be reversed in some cases

Also the understanding regarding drinking water/soft drinks was mixed. Further communication could usefully promote the advantages of regular soft drinks when drinking alcohol.

2. Health and Safety

There is already a sense of collective responsibility of looking after friends who had consumed too much alcohol. Among the under 25 age group there was a strong feeling of looking out for your peers - this suggests that a strong message might be to look at how drinking too much affects your ability to look after your mates – ‘If only I hadn’t had too much myself, I could have stopped her going off with that bloke/could have stopped him picking a fight’ ...etc

It is advised that any education programme is realistic and rooted entirely within a ‘normal’ world in order for it to be taken seriously. There is evidence of completely literal thinking in relation to previous Government campaigns – for example, those who think they know they will never climb scaffolding feel that the message is for other people and those who do not drive do not appear to pick up any sensible drinking messages from these campaigns because, put simply, it is not about them.

There is quite a general view of the Government as an interfering Nanny State and a general, nationwide, feeling of distrust and dislike of politics means that direct messages from the Government are less effective. It may be that communication directly from the medical profession/people recognised as ‘Doctors’, would have more impact.

“For me, I don’t think I’ve got a problem so I don’t know that the council needs to tell me anything. Maybe through the doctor – I suppose I’d listen to him if he was telling me I’m drinking too much. But two glasses a night isn’t too much, is it?”

(Female 25-40)

Also advice that is illustrated with pictures showing consequences of alcohol consumption is likely to be more effective than just text based warnings as found on cigarette packets.

“You can’t read the words, it gives you this and it gives you that, and you can’t read the words. So are you saying pictures are more effective? Yeahthere’s a lung covered in tumours”

(Male 16-18)

3. Units

The concept of units is not well understood and is not considered useful or credible. In fact it is ridiculed by many, and does not form a valid basis for further promotion.

Role Of The Family

Cutting across older groups, both home drinkers and those who drink in bars, when asked about an ideal Saturday, those with families were most likely to imagine an idyllic family activity – watching the children smiling and playing, having a good time out with their kids.

Recent events which have really thoroughly been enjoyed were trips to Alton Towers or London with the family and visits to football / rugby matches via a family ticket offer. These events, which sometimes spread into the evening, were largely alcohol free therefore it is suggested that the potential viability of 'family centric' activities are explored. The caveats to such activities are time and cost. Larger trips need to be planned /booked and often the price (event, travel and food) is quite high.

Possibilities for Kirklees to consider would include:

- Increasing opportunities via funding, advertising and organising family activities. This could be via partnership with theatres, travel companies but also as local as teaming up with sports teams to offer an accessible family package at weekends.
- Supporting access to events with more travel options / prices
- Liaison with national travel companies for discounted trips from the region to events further afield (special trains/coaches etc)
- also emphasising the role of parents as role models and activity initiators within the context of the family. This could tie in with local initiatives such as family learning – computer courses that families could complete together, for example.

"I've just been to London with my husband, my daughter and one her friends and I didn't touch a drop. ... we shopped; we went to the Tutankhamen exhibition at the O2 Arena. We had a really good time. ...the good thing was just being together as a family and enjoying each other's company"

(Female 25-40)

"I would like to be able to do things with my son like sports or computers or something. He's a good swimmer so I would like to be able to take him swimming more often. ... Do you swim with him? No! I go in but I can't swim! Is it something that you would like to learn? Yeah I would like swimming lessons! So it would be something that you could do together? Yeah that's right"

(Female 25-40)

Price

While lack of money has been identified as a key inhibitor to drinking alcohol, generally respondents felt that putting the price of alcohol up would not cause a reduction in drinking. Naturally respondents were initially negative to any price changes given that it would affect them directly.

An increase in prices in the On License Trade was seen as detrimental to the survival of a trade already hit hard by the smoking ban. Respondents felt that a rise in prices would simply encourage more people to switch to home drinking.

Off Trade pricing was felt to be very competitive, with many multi-buy offers available. This encouraged both more in-home drinking (as opposed to drinking in bars), also high consumption of alcohol before people go out.

Across the board (On Trade and Off Trade) price increases equally would not have a substantial effect. Drinking is seen as a basic need that must be met, and sacrifices would be made in other areas (entertainment, food – young people) to maintain drinking levels.

Increased differential in prices (e.g. certain drinks targeted) would prompt people to consider switching categories, but not to change altogether. If some drinks are less 'dangerous' this could help modify drinking patterns.

One factor that does seem to rely heavily on price discounting and drives high levels of alcohol consumption is the availability of cheap Shots. The impact of Shots on drinking patterns has been noted previously. They are seen as a highly appealing and effective way of getting very drunk. Control of how many outlets are offering shots, and how often, may go some way to reducing excessive drunkenness among those under 25 years old.

Control Around And Within Drinking Venues

Many of the young people and students talked about the actions of those who did not understand how to drink – be that at 16 or 18yrs old. One of the advantages of encouraging those aged 18yrs+ into pubs/student bars is that drinking within this environment is regulated in theory, with the Licensee dependent on obeying certain rules for their Liquor Licence to be granted.

Consequently increased partnership between Kirklees Partnership and Bars and Clubs within the Kirklees region would be a sound initial step in terms of controlling excessive drunkenness.

There are a number of specific initiatives around this area:

- Training of bar and door staff – to accept only genuine ID from both males and females.
- To increase training among bar staff so that they are aware of their responsibilities to those who appear under the influence of alcohol (including the confidence to refuse to serve).
- Communication strategy across doormen/bars to ensure that groups of young drinkers are monitored, not just on entry but while in the establishment.
- To ensure that a consistent no admittance policy for those who are drunk or underage is followed throughout the region
- To monitor those who are incapable through consumption of alcohol and alert a central monitoring function
- To have communication between bars to alert them about those who have been refused / had too much to drink
- To link these communications to the police so that they can monitor.

In addition to actions related to the management of their customers, there are also specific actions that can be taken related to activities in bars. Currently the trends are for bars to encourage excessive drinking and to promote alcoholic shots. There is a sense for some (students) that bars do not act responsibly. Strong measures in this area could be taken to help enforce control of young people.

- Banning bar/drinking competitions
- Banning free shots/ low priced offers
- Repositioning of soft drinks – encouragement of designated driver free soft drinks
- Introduction of cool/trendy soft drinks with colour/flavour appeal similar to the shots/alcopops but without alcohol content – perhaps via repackaging, rebranding.
- Alcohol free drinks to be served in the same glasses and style as alcoholic drinks
- Low alcohol options to be available
- Soft drink vending machines to be available.
- Reduction in the price of soft drinks, which are currently seen as expensive and poor value, compared to alcoholic drinks.
- Smaller measures may be an area for exploration. For some, this may not be a deterrent to those who aim to reach a specific physical feeling of drunkenness. For women drinking at home, 50cl bottles rather than 75cl bottles would be relevant to those who drink at home but feel the need to finish the bottle. An alternative angle might be to promote certain drinks in special measures e.g. glass types – launch a new range of glasses for women to drink lager in 250ml measures rather than pints.

Youth - Late Night Activities

For the young people's groups there is a strong association of 'drinking alcohol' and 'being grown up'. So it is useful to consider what other activities young people associate with a mark of coming of age/being grown up. These include smoking, no longer being at school, staying out late, spending time with friends rather than family and mixing with the opposite sex.

"Yeah because it's (Tokyo) like the last place you go in, it's like 1 o'clock"

(Male 16-18)

"Just nothing better to do have you, sat at home or something, you just go there, and have a laugh"

(Male 16-18)

The 'being out late' area offers some scope for potential development. If one could develop and promote activities which involved being out late, without necessarily involving drinking, then these might be productive. These might include

- **late night concerts/open-air music/fairs** (events that do not involve large extra spend – i.e. just places to be which carry on late, rather than specials which have high admission)
- **late night places to meet** (e.g. Youth Clubs which are open every night and stay open later than 8 or 9pm)
- **late night specials at cinemas (at reasonable prices)**
- **organised youth services trips** (Go-karting, dog racing, horse racing, paintballing) NB some cross over here with appeal also among the older age band

Youth – Alternative Meeting Places

Dressing up is very key to the females overall and particularly those aged 16-24 years. Therefore providing a place to meet which has a sense of occasion – perhaps holding a Youth Club, or event, in hotel function room would increase its appeal (both as an ‘adult’ and aspirational venue)

For the males offering a range of suitable activities at a Youth Club is vital – also a competitive edge appears appealing, for example free or low cost pool or computer gaming. Other options would be to give access at a reasonable price per hour to the top games.

Elements to include might involve the ability to be able to play with mates on decent sized screens, with scope for friends to be gathered around or to play on larger screen. That is to say set about creating an environment that mimics being round at the mate’s house with alcohol, without there being access to alcohol. Ideally this could be a mixed adult/youth environment so there is a greater sense of control.

While the above may be a more male-orientated solution, dry discos appeared to have some appeal among female respondents. Key to enjoyment of their night was the opportunity to dress up – this it appeared was almost as important as the opportunity to consume alcohol. There were mentions of successful dry discos already within the area, and there is history of such events within young Asian communities.

Citrus in Headingley, which does serve alcohol, was one location mentioned as a place where one was less likely to consume alcohol because of the atmosphere and range of activities and refreshments available.

“... there’s a juice bar/restaurant in Headingley called Citrus that’s open till 2 in the morning. ... you can get alcohol there but you don’t have to. But, there are nicer drinks there; there’s stuff like fruit juice and that. ... Yeah, what I usually do is to have a small vodka with a fruit juice. That’s it; you buy it more for the actual taste of the drink than the alcohol. ...It’s a different type of night out really. Although it’s a bar and there’s music playing it’s more mellow than the places on Greek St in Leeds. There are two levels to it: There’s the restaurant downstairs and upstairs there is a bar, but it’s more of a chill-out bar with pool tables and couches and coffee tables rather than chairs. So, you can sit down and have a chat with your mates,

and maybe play a few games of pool. ..In Citrus there's music playing but it's more kind of background noise. The music is a lot lower so you can actually have a proper chat. There's a big screen with football showing so you can chat about the football and maybe have a couple of games of pool."

(Male 25-40)

Youth – Cinema

The cinema was noted previously, as an area for late night opening. Additionally there is a wider role that cinema could potentially play. The current barrier to this is price and travel. A reduction in price of cinema tickets and cheap/safe transport to cinemas (particularly in Cleckheaton) would have strong appeal.

Showing films within communities, e.g. tying in with the Flicks in the Sticks project, a touring rural cinema which used local halls, would also have appeal – particularly to older females who live outside Huddersfield.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Arts Alive and Flicks in the Sticks' page on the Herefordshire Council website. The page features a green header with the council logo and navigation links. A left-hand menu lists various arts and culture categories. The main content area includes a title, a brief description of the organization, and contact information. The page is viewed on a Windows XP desktop environment.

Arts Alive and Flicks in the Sticks - Herefordshire Council - Packard Bell

http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure/arts_and_crafts/28684.asp

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Echo

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Lion Ballroom

Rural Media Company

The Music Pool

The Three Choirs Festival

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Arts Alive and Flicks in the Sticks

Delivering on Cultural Strategy theme 'Involvement of the Community' - integration of communities across age, background and ability, and targeted schemes that specifically recognise diversity.

Performance Indicator: Sales of tickets for festivals/events.

Address: Blue Barn, Green Lane, Churchstoke, SY15 6EN.

Contacts: Sian Kerry or Melanie Davies. Tel: 01588 620883. e-mail: sian@artsalive.co.uk or mel@artsalive.co.uk

Brief description of organisation

Through Arts Alive, Herefordshire's rural touring scheme, local volunteer promoters bring interesting, entertaining, professional performances to small communities. Local and rural doesn't mean second rate, it's top class and very varied; unexpected delights in out of the way places. Our touring cinema programme Flicks in the Sticks makes a big screen viewing possible in tiny places.

What makes Arts Alive events so special is the combination of quality performances in intimate spaces, which creates an exciting, fresh experience for both audiences and performers. Ticket prices are kept as low as possible, making it easier for the whole family to come, and the programme is varied enough to find something to please everybody. All Arts Alive shows are unique, there may be a bar, there may be home made cakes in the interval: but you can be sure of a warm welcome and a great night out. With Arts Alive, professional entertainment is affordable and available on your doorstep.

External Links

Our External Links Statement.

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Park Regeneration

Consideration should also be given to how one could modify the environment to make it more conducive to people sitting around late at night, without it being either overly supervised, or too dangerous. Currently people stay in

bars/clubs as they offer a managed space. Apart from late night restaurants/takeaways other spaces at night are felt to be less safe. Lighting is felt to be poor, there are no people around to provide security, nor any other formal security.

The park is one area that would benefit from reconsideration - bringing it into the 21st century. Parks are places high on young people's radars yet at night aren't seen as particularly pleasant or safe places to be. Therefore, it is suggested that redevelopment of the park area, or some other area, would be helpful to provide a place where people can hang around, and where there is something else going on (plenty of people implying a safe environment).

Also, within the context of park development there is a specific need to look at hard courts for basketball, netball, 5-a-side football etc. There is strong demand (among young males particularly) for decent floodlit hard courts. In addition, built into the planning could be some seating areas, good lighting of the area and access to/from town, snack places (potentially doubling as providing a measure of security on site). In addition, keeping the sports areas well equipped would be critical to encouraging use – for example, keeping nets on the football goals throughout the year, rather than just in the football season. Provision of official coaching could also increase uptake and participation of sport among both males and females.

In the longer term it would be useful to consider partnerships with, or understanding of, women's sports initiatives, which encourage on-going participation in sport among girls of 14+ years. Secondary Schools are beginning to act on this by the introduction of dance, aerobics and fitness into the curriculum for girls. A lack of self and body confidence act as a huge barrier to participation in sport for girls and this was evident in the levels of participation in sport of the 16-18 year old females vs males.

Promoting Evening Retail Culture

A love of shopping was apparent among young and older women. For many shopping was identified as the main hobby/interest other than drinking.

Thinking particularly about town centres there is potential to encourage late night opening, linked in to availability of snack places and seating, so the shopping experience becomes an event rather than a transaction. The key factor would be to create a buzz in part of the town - and the big question would be how to motivate retailers to get involved. Access to an exciting retail environment outside normal hours may well replace, for many, the need spend time in pubs and bars.

Improved (cheap) transport links to Huddersfield from the surrounding areas such as Batley, Cleckheaton or Dewsbury would also be integral to the success of this scheme as shops in those areas possibly lack the excitement and attraction of the major chains in Huddersfield and other major towns.

Combining this retail provision with large screen sports viewing could extend the appeal to both sexes.

Family Pubs

Opportunities for controlled drinking experiences for teenagers with parents are limited. It may be beneficial to look at encouraging family pubs which offer a real appeal to older teenagers i.e. including access to some alcohol.

The concept might include meals (to facilitate licensing) and an event/quiz etc as part of an integrated evening. This environment would also control alcohol consumption of the adults, as well as the teenagers.

Bar Culture

The research has highlighted major issues across all ages with feeling different from the group. When all the rest of the group are drinking alcohol, the pressure is to drink alcohol too.

To break the cycle, encouragement could be given to premises that are conducive to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks (mirroring French café-bars). Acceptability of these may be an issue, but they could perhaps be given support to test as a concept.

Local Clubs

For those drinking at home, the key trigger, across all ages is price (the smoking ban also plays a part among older respondents). In the home environment there are fewer influences that society can exert. It would be productive to encourage these drinkers back to a managed environment, where behaviour can be observed and where alternative activities can provide a balance to moderate consumption.

If there are local Working Mens'/Sports Clubs available, then they could be encouraged to open membership and run activities which might draw people in and when there, distract them from drinking (quizzes, pool competitions etc)

Regular Sports

Regularity of exercise is key, but the trigger to getting started, for some, is competition. The barrier is being able to organise events. If the local authorities took a lead in making facilities available, and provided organisation or coaching, young people would find it much easier to engage in this activity than they do currently.

12. Impact of Existing 'Sensible Drinking' Communication Campaigns

There was very high awareness of **drink driving advertising** and no respondents challenged the given norm that one should not drink and drive. In fact using driving as an excuse not to drink, (should one not be able to financially or medically) was regarded as a positive and credible stance to take among 16-18yr olds (male and female).

"I don't like to drink that early because I like to drive places, I wouldn't like to start drinking and not be able to get places"
(Male 16-18)

"I'd still go out [if I couldn't drink] and drive or something to give me an excuse not to drink"
(Male 16-18)

"Mine's cut down a lot recently since I started driving. So, like before, I'd go to work, we'd all go to the pub after work for like eight or nine pints whatever which was quite a bad habit but it was good fun"
(Male student)



Unprompted there was high recall of the **Know Your Limits** campaign across all age groups. The majority recognised the superhero poster when it was shown.



However, despite high recognition there was little evidence of modification of behaviour as a result of seeing the TV advertising or posters. A few respondents claimed that it did make them think for a moment but generally this did not translate into altered behaviour patterns later on in the evening. Some respondents admitted to turning the TV off when it came on, or turning away from the advertisement.

“When you hear those adverts...”

“Yeah, drinking ... fall off the scaffolding...”

“I always turn it off...”

“It’s just that noise his head makes when it hits the floor”

(Males 16-18)

The circumstances featured, while shocking, were not felt to be relevant. There was a sense that more realistic messages, which touch on people’s practical experiences (and with alternative messages for men and women of different ages) would be more useful.

“I don’t know, I wouldn’t really plan on climbing scaffolding so...”

(Male 16-18)

Other comments suggested that, as with cigarette labelling, one simply got numb to the concepts and that a greater variety of advertising would be more effective.

“That was a really good advert but there’s not enough of them because the first time I saw that I was like completely astounded by it but then like it is on every time I go to the cinema and every time I am watching TV it comes on at least once and it is like well it was good. If they took it off for six months and then put it back on then people would forget about it and see it again”

(Male student)

When compared to other campaigns (e.g. 5-a-day) which are perceived to be Government driven, the sensible drinking campaign was not regarded as effective.

“There are lots of adverts telling you that you have to 5 a day: Even a Weetabix advert tells you that you have to get 5 a day. But, you don’t get alcohol adverts saying you can’t drink too much or you’ll damage your health. Mostly the ads are just about the dangers of drinking and driving and I don’t drive so I don’t pay attention to them”

(Male 25-40yrs D)

When shown copies of the black and white alcohol information leaflet respondents claimed not to have seen them, or to have seen similar but not picked them up. They also acknowledged that there are posters and leaflets all around to advise them but, because they do not consider themselves to

have a problem – they are in control, or it is part of growing up, it is something to address in a few years, they do not need them.

No respondents had accessed information from the Internet.

Most importantly, people are unlikely to seek out such messages because they do not recognise that their behaviour needs to be modified. They feel that they are in control and have no health issues.

13. Conclusions And Recommendations

The research sought to understand why people consume above Government recommended sensible limits of alcohol and whether products or services could be developed and delivered to satisfy the same needs that are met by drinking.

Respondents to the research all qualified under the Mintel definition of 'Regular Drinkers' or 'Quantity over Quality' (these two segments representing 47% of the population). It is important therefore to remember that these conclusions and recommendations represent only the situation for this part of the Kirklees population.

Our key conclusions and recommendations from this research are:

- Drinking is embedded in British culture for this part of the population - a teenage rite of passage, a social lubricant, a reward at the end of the day. Encouraging more moderate drinking is a significant challenge even if effectively facilitated
- Teenagers and students are the most likely to consume very high levels of alcohol on a single occasion. Levels of alcohol consumption typically moderate with age (although the majority of the sample still drank significantly more than Government guidelines) due to accumulation of responsibilities (e.g. job, children) limiting opportunities for excessive drinking or reduced ability to process alcohol as efficiently as when younger (worse/longer hangovers). This means that many feel that drinking behaviour self-regulates over time. The message of 'addiction' – i.e. that for some, the body starts to crave alcohol over time regardless of responsibilities or good intentions, is not widely considered or understood. Breaking the perception (that the drinker is in control) is key to creating a new environment of responsible drinking
- Government messages have very little credibility with this section of the population; this is a serious impediment to moderating drinking behaviour. Almost all respondents felt Government guidelines on 'safe' drinking were far too low, and potentially motivated by the Government's need/desire to 'cover itself'. Consequently, with no credible barometer against which to measure 'problem drinking', the vast majority of respondents felt their drinking was not problematic or dangerous. Again, whilst we fully understand (and address below) Kirklees' desire to offer products and services to moderate drinking, the research suggests very strongly that fundamental communication messages need to be made much more relevant (tangible and evidenced) for this part of the population
- There is substantial evidence of apathy and lack of stimulation amongst this sector of the population. Although sport remains reasonably popular amongst younger males, relatively few young female respondents or older females had active interests or hobbies beyond socialising and shopping. This means that many default to alcohol as a means of stimulating, diverting or entertaining themselves. The

emotions that drive this are linked with confidence and release. Alcohol is perceived to satisfy these needs easily and quickly, so its position as a leisure activity is reinforced. Challenging this over time means addressing deep-seated psychological issues about happiness and life-meaning. In the short term, there is scope to encourage alternative leisure activities and hobbies amongst this sector of the population. Making these available is part of the issue; there is also a requirement to communicate better about what is available and to actively encourage participation. Primarily, there appear to be opportunities in:

- Imaginative/creative sport and fitness opportunities (e.g. street dance, kick-boxing, late-starter coaching to bring back 16yrs+ girls)
- Education or skills development opportunities, across age groups
- Offering a range of activities to strengthen the concept of 'Family' (e.g. liaison with sports grounds to offer subsidised family membership, offering educational courses that can be completed as a family)
- Alternative leisure facilities – such as retail area and park redevelopment, supervised late night opportunities such as dry Youth Clubs, concerts, cinema specials (all of the above underpinned by effective transport links)
- Readdressing the 'norms' of expected drinking behaviour among young people and particularly students
- There are also opportunities to exert more control in bars and pubs to moderate binge drinking opportunities. This would primarily target the younger drinkers, potentially moderating their behaviour before it becomes long term and habitual. These opportunities include:
 - Preventing premises from selling cheap (£1) shots and from actively promoting shots
 - Better co-ordination between establishments and enforcement of bar staff duties in refusing to serve under-age or drunk customers.
 - Better supervision of activities within pubs and clubs rather than just relying on door staff to spot underage drinkers.
 - Control over drinking venue leafleting among students.
 - Encouraging 'Family Nights' in bars to bring in-home drinkers back into pubs and allow teenagers supervised access to alcohol to discourage unsupervised access in parks and alleys.