

Teenagers' views on solutions to alcohol misuse

Report on a national consultation



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Office of the Minister for Children

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Foreword

It is widely acknowledged that alcohol is a major risk factor for social and physical harm. The Government is committed to addressing a range of issues that contribute to alcohol-related harm and is particularly concerned with the effects of this problem on children and young people.

A number of Government-led initiatives are working to reduce alcohol-related harm:

- the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive meet regularly to discuss alcohol policy and to advance the recommendations of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol;
- the Implementation Group, established to oversee the recommendations of the Sustaining Progress Working Group on Alcohol, continues to address the problems associated with alcohol misuse;
- the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform established an Alcohol Advisory Group in 2007, which examined key aspects of the law governing the sale and consumption of alcohol and related public order issues. Legislation on these issues is currently being prepared.

Research surveys in this area - for example, the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) - show that binge drinking is a problem among many teenagers in Ireland and that Irish teenagers have a very high rate of alcohol consumption.

The National Children's Strategy states that 'children and young people will have a voice on issues that affect their lives'. The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) has the lead role in driving implementation of this objective and has established structures to ensure that children and young people can contribute to the development of policies and services that affect them.

In February 2007, the Government announced a series of consultation workshops with teenagers, to seek their views on the solutions to addressing alcohol misuse by young people. It is my belief that if alcohol misuse among teenagers is to be effectively addressed, we must consider the solutions put forward by young people themselves.

This report outlines the views of the 257 teenagers, aged 12-18 years, who took part in consultations organised by the OMC in five locations around the country during October 2007. The views contained in the report are those of the teenage participants and are not necessarily shared by myself or by the staff in my Office. However, the proposals deserve to be taken seriously and considered by those developing policies and services in reducing alcohol-related harm.

I am impressed by the mature and responsible manner in which the teenagers participated in this process and urge parents, policy-makers, educators and service providers to read this report and take heed of its proposals.

Brendan Smith, TD
Minister for Children

Acknowledgements

The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) would like to acknowledge the invaluable input made by the members of the Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) in the planning, organisation and delivery of these consultations on alcohol misuse. The input of the CYPF ensured that the process was youth-led and youth-focused from beginning to end.

Most importantly, the OMC would like to acknowledge each of the 257 young people who participated in the consultations and who gave freely of their time and ideas in such a mature fashion, as well as the staff from the schools and youth organisations who facilitated their involvement.

A full list of the staff involved in the consultations is given in Appendix 5 of this report.

About the author

Olivia McEvoy, Cnag ar an Doras, is a freelance consultant and lifecoach in the youth and community sectors.

She has written the youth-friendly versions of *Teenspace: The National Recreation Policy for Young People* (2007) and the *Report on the consultations with teenagers on the issues to be considered by the Minister for Children when examining the age of consent for sexual activity* (2006) for the Office of the Minister for Children. In addition, she has written the *Youth Stereotyping Resource Pack* for the Equality Authority and a forthcoming *Kids Kit: A guide to developing and implementing programmes for children and young people* for OPEN, the national network of one-parent families.

Further details on www.cnagarandoras.ie

Executive Summary

In February 2007, the Minister for Children announced that his Office would consult with teenagers on alcohol misuse. The consultations were designed to explore how young people themselves view teenage drinking and also to seek their views on the most effective ways of dealing with excessive teenage drinking.

A diverse and representative group of 257 young people, between the ages of 12 and 18, were consulted with in 5 locations across the country. There was an overwhelming response to the invitation to participate in the consultations, indicating a significant interest in both youth participation and the topic itself.

The consultations were framed to seek young people's views on the *solutions* to alcohol misuse. There was considerable agreement among participants in all locations on the important areas on which to focus. The top 4 of these were:

- the legal age to drink alcohol;
- alternative alcohol-free facilities;
- education;
- law enforcement.

A number of specific and key solutions were also identified and prioritised by the participants using a 'sticky dot' voting system. The top 5 solutions emerged as:

- lower the legal age of drinking alcohol to 16;
- offer alternative alcohol-free facilities;
- role of parents;
- age-appropriate education programmes;
- updated and enforced ID system.

Other issues that were considered important by the participants included the role of the Gardaí, peer-mentoring programmes, the role of the media and advertising, and peer pressure in youth culture.

The consultations provided a space for candid, open and safe discussion on the issue of alcohol misuse. The participants were extremely grateful for the opportunity to express their opinions and views on the solutions to alcohol misuse. Though some of the outcomes and solutions proffered may be in conflict with existing research and professional opinion, it was the expressed hope of the participants that their voice and opinions would be given reasonable and due weight and consideration in any change in the law, policy or practice in the future.

1 Overview

In February 2007, the Minister for Children announced that his Office would consult with teenagers on alcohol misuse. The consultations were designed to explore how young people themselves view teenage drinking and also to seek their views on the most effective ways of dealing with excessive teenage drinking.

Research findings from the 2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) found that 57% of Irish children, aged 15, said that they had had 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row *'at least once in the last 30 days'*. The survey also found that girls were now drinking as much as boys. When compared to 33 other European countries, Irish 15-year-olds were in joint 3rd place, on a par with the Isle of Man. Only Denmark (60%) and the Netherlands (58%) reported a higher proportion of 15-year-olds binge drinking. (The 5-drink threshold, or 'binge drinking', is considered problematic alcohol intake.)

Involvement of Children and Young People's Forum

There is a growing awareness of the need to involve children and young people directly in researching their lives, which is an integral part of the National Children's Strategy 2000-2010, *Our Children - Their Lives* (Department of Health and Children, 2000). It was at the behest of the Minister for Children that teenagers would be involved from the outset in the planning and conducting of these consultations, in keeping with international best practice on participation by young people in decision-making.

To this end, the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) invited its Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) to work with it on all aspects of devising, planning, conducting and delivering the consultations. Members of the CYPF are aged 12-18 years and have been working with the OMC since November 2004. They have been involved in a number of important policy developments, including the National Recreation Policy (2007).

A meeting was held on 31 March 2007 to explain the request from the Minister for Children that members of the CYPF be an integral part of the process. Accepting the invitation, they then gave their views on all aspects of the consultations, including:

- the age group to be involved in the consultations;
- the best method for conducting the consultations;
- whether the consultations should be peer-led or conducted by adults;
- the kind of environment in which to conduct the consultations;
- the type of venue;
- rural/urban differences;
- other issues.

The CYPF decided that the consultations should be held in as many locations as possible around the country, in comfortable venues (such as hotels) and should be open to all young people aged between 12 and 18. They also chose the 'Open Space' methodology so that the *'main focus would be on smaller groups'* and so that the participants would be able to choose their own workshops *'depending on what the individual person is interested in'*.

The CYPF was also unanimous in its view that the consultations should be peer-led and that the adults present would merely be there *'to keep order and time - someone who will understand the issues'*. However, during the training of the CYPF members in July 2007, it became clear to the young people that effective facilitation is a highly skilled activity and some of them opted to act as co-facilitators, with many of them preferring to take on organisational or administrative roles.

The training programme was devised to familiarise the members of the CYPF with the 'Open Space' methodology and also to give them the skills to perform the role of co-facilitator in each workshop. Training was also provided on administrative and project management skills to enable all of the members to run the consultations jointly with the adults, even if they did not want to be a co-facilitator.

Considerable effort at both the initial meeting of the CYPF and the later training programme ensured that members were able to contribute meaningfully to the consultation process and to the consultations themselves. The process perhaps serves to highlight the fact that, while it is more than possible to include young people in a meaningful way in a consultation process, it is vital to also provide the necessary support and training to enable that inclusion. A full copy of the CYPF training programme is outlined in Appendix 4 of this report.

The consultations were framed in a way that the participants were asked to focus on the 'solutions to alcohol misuse'. Participants then identified and prioritised the key solutions and the necessary actions to take to put these solutions into practice.

To ensure the voice of the participants is at the fore, this report outlines the outcomes from the consultations and the recommendations of the participants as presented and prioritised by them.

Selection of participants

Each school and youth organisation in the chosen locations was asked to select a maximum of three participants. Invitations were also sent to Youth Reach centres and a number of 'special interest' groups. The response to the invitation and the level of interest in the consultations was overwhelming and the 50 places in each location could have been filled numerous times over. It is clear that young people are extremely interested in processes that enable them to have their voice heard and that organisations and schools are keen to support them in doing so. It is also clear that there is significant interest in seeking solutions to alcohol misuse.

In total, 257 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 attended one of 5 consultations, held in centrally located hotels in Athlone, Sligo, Cork and Dublin (*see Figure 1*). The participants were broadly representative of gender (*see Figure 2*), age and social background, and two consultations were held in Dublin to reflect the size of the population.

Figure 1: Participants by location

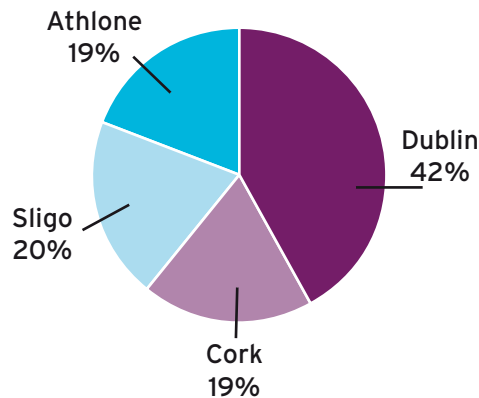
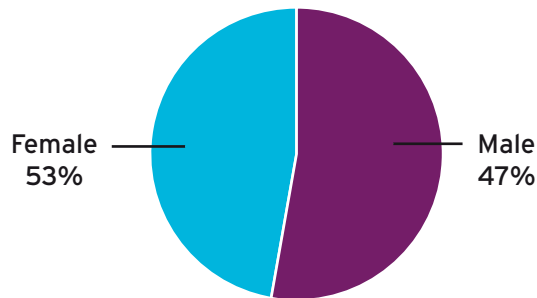


Figure 2: Participants by gender



Child protection

Child protection arrangements were put in place for each of the consultations and carried out in accordance with the Code of Good Practice on Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector, which is based on *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Health and Children, 1999). A Child Protection Designated Officer was present at each of the consultations and only adults directly involved in the process were permitted in the venue once the consultations had commenced.

Methodology

The young people from the CYPF were keen that the consultations be held in a way that allowed young people's opinions and voice to be heard in its purest form. With so much mention of alcohol misuse in the media, it was also considered important that the agenda itself would be set by the young people at each consultation. To enable these aspirations, 'Open Space' was used as the principal methodology for the consultation process.

Following a brief introduction to the topic and methodology, each participant was asked to identify what they considered the two most important solutions to alcohol misuse. Having been given two 'post-its' each, the participants were then invited to 'post' their contribution on an open wall. With the help of young people from the CYPF, these issues

were then clustered together to form the themes for the workshops for the day. At some consultations, as many as eight different themes were identified for workshops, but as few as four separate themes were identified in one location. Whatever the number, it was the issues and themes identified by the participants themselves that formed the agenda and workshops for each consultation. Young people could choose to go to any of the four workshops in the morning and any of the four workshops in the afternoon. They could also choose to use the 'law of two feet' and move from one workshop to another at any point.

The workshops were facilitated by adult facilitators, familiar with the 'Open Space' methodology and trained to ensure the voice of the young person is at the fore. Members of the CYPF who had undergone facilitation training in July 2007 also co-facilitated in a number of locations. The workshops were led by and based on the information from the 'post-it' notes that had been contributed by the participants. The facilitators directed the participants to discuss the solutions under the theme of the workshop before ranking the Top 3 key points or recommendations.

The Top 3 key points from each workshop were then put together and presented to the participants in a Plenary Session. In many cases, there was significant overlap and repetition emerging from different workshops. In these instances, the solutions were combined and presented as one. Each participant was given three 'sticky dots' and invited to vote on what they considered the most important solutions to alcohol misuse. They could decide to give all three of their dots to one solution or to divide their dots between two or three solutions. While the 'sticky dot' voting process is an age-old methodology, it is also an extremely empowering one, allowing young people to identify their preference precisely, without having to articulate their reasons why or without having to vote with the crowd. In addition, young people had to deliberate what weight they would attach to each solution or solutions.

At the end of the process, each participant had played an equal role in identifying the themes for the workshops, ranking the solutions under each theme in the workshops and voting on the final outcomes as to what they considered the most important solutions to alcohol misuse.

The OMC is confident that the methodology allowed young people to represent their honest and real views and opinions on the solutions to alcohol misuse.

Moving debate

Having evaluated the first two consultations, it was decided to introduce a 'moving debate' into the consultation programme. Based on the themes emerging on the day, questions were posed to participants, asking them to stand in a position that represented 'agree', 'disagree' or 'undecided'. Participants were asked why they had chosen such a position and also given an opportunity to move, having listened to other perspectives or opinions. The 'moving debate' was designed to allow participants more time to interact and engage with each other, debate differing opinions and provide a space for them to work out how they felt about various issues before casting their 'sticky dot' vote.

Since the moving debate was introduced to the programme in the third consultation and evolved as a process throughout the consultations, this report does not contain any of the outcomes from that debate. However, it proved an extremely popular and useful tool, and one which the OMC plans to use again in future consultations.

Agenda for CONSULTATIONS

The agenda for each consultation was as follows:

Time	Agenda item
10.00am	Registration
10.30am	Welcome and Introduction
10.40am	Brief overview
10.50am	Ice-breaker/Group agreement
11.00am	Introduction to 'Open Space'
11.15am	Developing themes for 8 workshops
11.20am	Session 1 - 4 workshops
12.15pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.00pm	Session 2 - 4 workshops
2.00pm	Establishing main issues from workshops
2.10pm	Feedback session from workshops and ranking issues
2.50pm	Verbal evaluation
2.55pm	Next steps and Close

2 Outcomes and Analysis of the Four Key Themes

The consultations produced a wealth of information, with the participants fully engaged in making suggestions about solutions to alcohol misuse. Despite consulting with 257 young people in 5 locations across the country, there was remarkable consistency in the themes and solutions that emerged - only 11 different themes for workshops emerged in total, as shown in by Table 1.

Table 1: Workshops by location

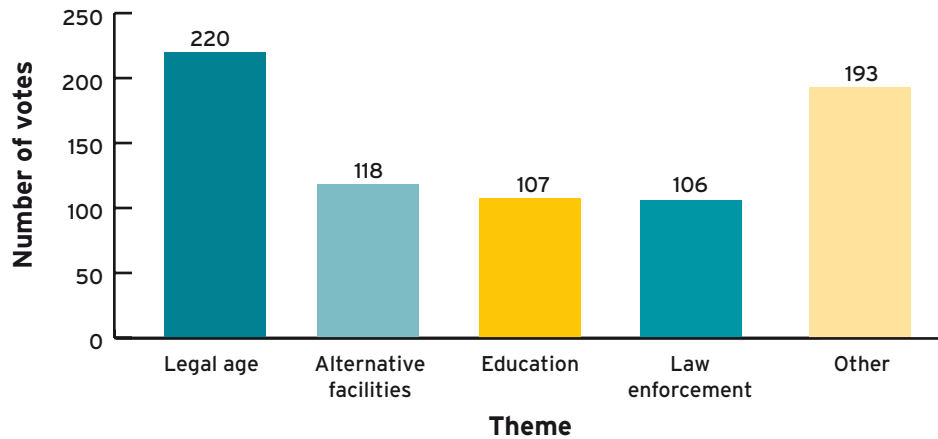
Themes	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
Education	1	1	2	2	2	8
Alternative alcohol-free facilities	1	1	2	2	1	7
Law enforcement/ The Law	1	1	2	1	1	6
Legal age	1	2		1	1	5
General issues		2			1	3
Youth culture and peer pressure				1	2	3
Media and advertising	1		1	1		3
Family/Friends/ Community	1	1				2
Role of parents			1			1
Confidence and peer pressure	1					1
Information	1					1

As indicated in Table 1, the four themes that dominated the solutions put forward by the participants were:

1. education;
2. alternative alcohol-free facilities;
3. law enforcement;
4. legal age to drink alcohol.

In addition, at the 'sticky dot' vote count - where participants had three dots each to distribute - votes under these themes accounted for 74% of all votes (*see Figure 3*). Here, the legal age to drink alcohol and the importance of providing alternative alcohol-free facilities ranked as the two most important issues, ahead of education and law enforcement.

Figure 3: 'Sticky dot' vote outcomes by theme



It is worthwhile to take a broad look at the four key themes before considering the specific solutions put forward by the participants (see *Chapter 3*). The total vote outcomes are illustrated in graphic form, while the voting by location is given in tables. Solutions that received no 'sticky dot' votes at all are *set in italic* in each table.

Theme 1: Legal age to drink alcohol

It is fair to say that the most animated debate centred on the legal age to drink alcohol (see *Figure 4 and Table 2*). While a small number of participants across the 5 locations spoke of increasing the legal age to 21, there were a small number of others in favour of maintaining the age at 18. However, the vast majority favoured one of two ideas that would allow young people to drink alcohol at 16:

- A system to allow 16-year-olds to drink alcohol in moderation in pubs using a 'safe limit' card, which would be electronically controlled and monitored by the Gardaí on a central database. Ideas on this system were numerous and varied, with some participants believing that young people should be allowed a maximum of 3 drinks per night, while others felt it should be based on a person's body mass index (BMI), which might make the maximum more or less depending on what was deemed safe and appropriate for that person.
- A two-tiered ID system where 16-18 year-olds would only be allowed to drink alcoholic drinks with a content of less than 5% alcohol.

The logic behind both systems is that young people consider it safer and more social to drink in a pub, *'otherwise you are just drinking in a field or under a bridge to get drunk'*. It was strongly felt that if young people were drinking safely in pubs, with either the type and/or the amount of alcohol they could consume curtailed, there would be much less likelihood of 'binge drinking' or drinking for the sole aim of getting drunk. Most young people like to watch sports games collectively or hang out with their older friends in pubs. While some are happy not to drink at all, many felt that it should be OK to *'have a beer or two with your friends when you are watching the match'*. There was a strong feeling that preventing people up to the age of 18 drinking alcohol created a lot of the 'buzz' or excitement around getting drunk and drinking, whereas if it was possible to go to the pub and be social, this 'buzz' would be greatly diminished.

Figure 4: Legal age to drink alcohol - Total vote outcome

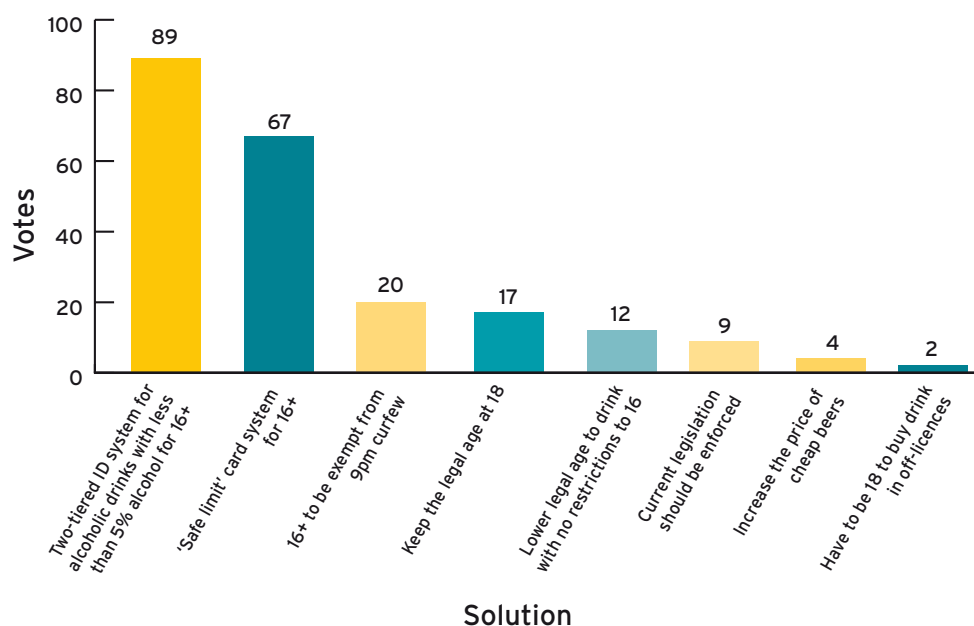


Table 2: Legal age to drink alcohol - Voting by location

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
Maintain current legal age limit						28
• Current legislation should be enforced	9					9
• Have to be 18 to buy drink in off-licences				2		2
• Keep the legal age at 18					17	17
Lower the legal age to 16						188
• System in place to allow 16-year-olds to drink alcohol in a pub/club in moderation using 'safe limit' card		28	39			67
• 16-year-olds should be allowed to stay in pubs after 9pm curfew		20				20
• Two-tiered ID system to allow 16-18 year-olds to drink alcohol not more than 5% volume in pubs/supervised venues		8		36	45	89
• Lower legal age to drink alcohol with no restrictions to 16					12	12
Other						4
• Increase the price of cheap beers		4				4

There was general appreciation among participants about why there is a legal age limit to drink alcohol, but there was a consensus that the legal age limit is largely ignored and *'most people are drinking when they are 16 or 17 anyway'*. With this in mind, participants felt that it would be better if the drinking of 16-year-olds was being monitored and supervised in a safe and social location.

Theme 2: Alternative alcohol-free facilities

It has long been argued by young people that they drink because *'there is nothing else to do'*. The lack of facilities or the need to provide reasonably priced activities or facilities as an alternative to alcohol-related activities was once again identified by participants in these consultations as a key solution to alcohol misuse (see Figure 5 and Table 3).

Youth cafés are considered particularly appealing, with nearly 8% of all 'sticky dot' votes used to call for more youth cafés across Ireland. However, it is important to note that it was acknowledged that even if there was the *'funkiest, coolest youth café on your doorstep'*, it would not eradicate alcohol misuse and would not prevent young people from wanting to drink *'at some point'*.

Several other practical solutions offered under the theme of 'alternative alcohol-free facilities' include:

- sports matches should be held first thing on a Saturday or Sunday morning to prevent young people drinking at weekends;
- sports clubs should encourage those who are average, as well as those who are talented;
- under-18s should be allowed into concerts and alcohol should be served in a confined or separate area to which they do not have access;
- a group of teenagers should review youth cafés and make recommendations on how they should be run.

Figure 5: Alternative alcohol-free facilities - Total vote outcome

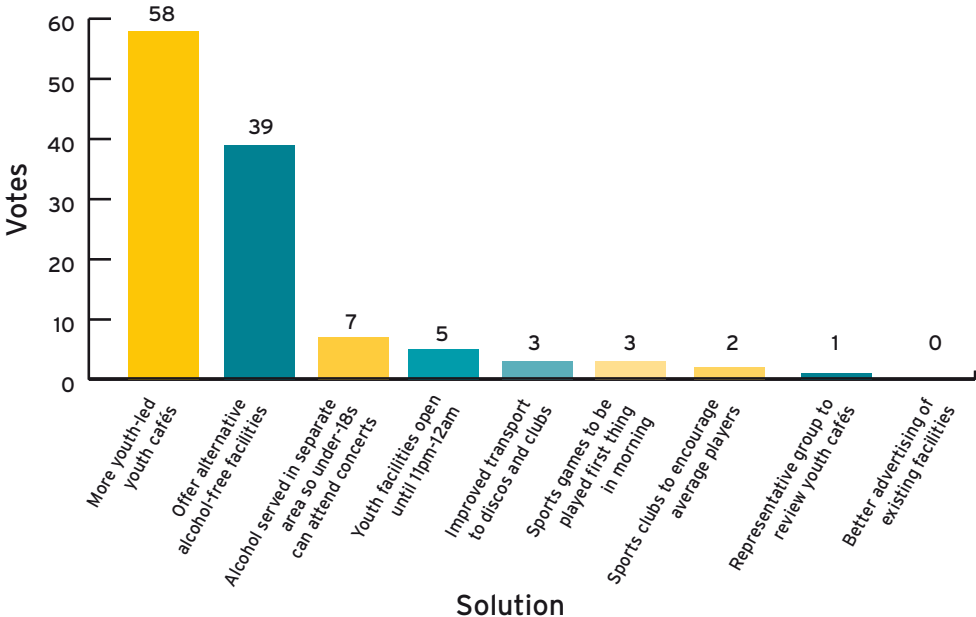


Table 3: Alternative alcohol-free facilities - Voting by location

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
Need for alternative activities						102
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer alternative alcohol-free facilities with a wide range of activities, run by youth organisations, to include skateboarding, rugby, dancing, girls' teams, swimming, horse-riding, basketball, etc. 	25		2	9	3	39
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More youth cafés that are youth-led and youth-friendly, with better opening hours and counselling available 		17	8	33		58
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities need to be open on weekend nights until 11pm or 12am 			5			5
General						16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved transport to discos and clubs 		3				3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better advertising of existing facilities 		0				0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports and important matches to be held first thing on Saturdays and Sundays 			3			3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group of teenagers (widely representative) to review youth cafés and recommend how they should be run 			1			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports clubs to encourage those who are average, as well as those who are good 			2			2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-18s should be allowed into concerts and alcohol should be served in separate areas 				7		7

Neither young people nor adults believe that simply providing more facilities with more exciting activities for young people will eradicate all misuse of alcohol. However, there is still a firm belief that accessible and affordable alcohol-free facilities would bring about a marked change and would at least provide an alternative for those who would much rather not drink and/or for those who are only drinking because there is nothing else to do.

Theme 3: Education

Education came up not only as a predominant workshop theme, but also as a suggested solution in many other workshops (see Figure 6 and Table 4). There was an overwhelming consensus that *'there is nowhere near enough education about alcohol'* and what is available is based on *'scare-mongering'* tactics. There was a strong move towards having age-appropriate education programmes on alcohol, delivered by objective professionals rather than school teachers.

Participants felt strongly that education needed to include information on responsible drinking, rather than just focusing on encouraging people not to drink at all - this *'just isn't realistic'*. It was also felt that *'young people who drink responsibly should also be used as role models for younger teenagers and not just those who are tee-totallers'*.

A number of participants also felt that a peer-mentoring programme might work well. Other suggestions included a DVD on the effects of alcohol and real-life stories from positive role models, such as sports stars or other young people.

There was also considerable agreement that schools need to play a more proactive role in educating young people about alcohol. This might include having a contract around not drinking or running a 'Drink Awareness Week', as well as providing a school counsellor to discuss any issues or problems that might lead to alcohol misuse.

Figure 6: Education - Total vote outcome

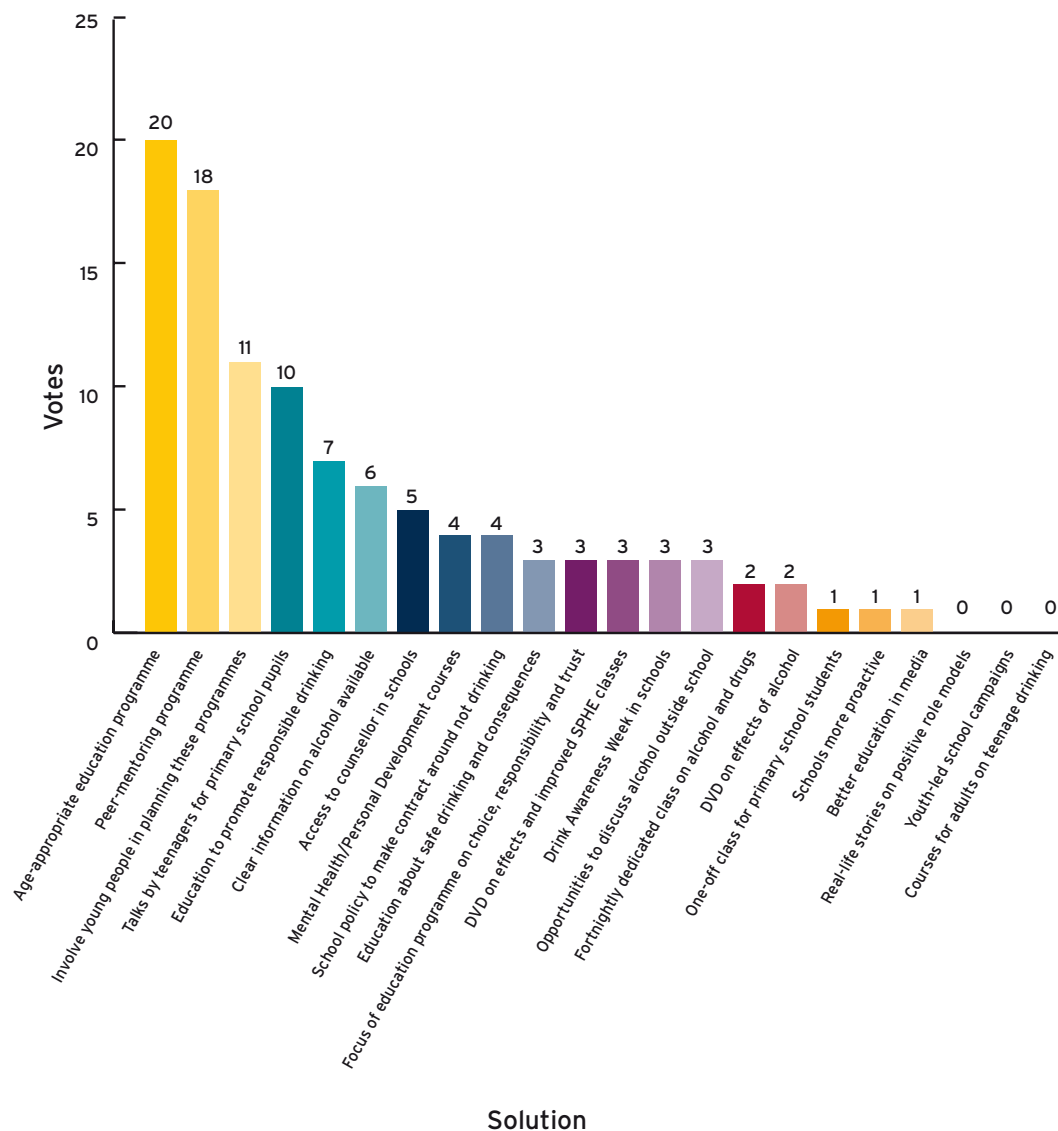


Table 4: Education - Voting by location

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
Programmes						48
• Age-appropriate education programme for every school year	20					20
• Involve young people in planning these programmes	11					11
• Education about safe drinking and consequences		3				3
• Education programmes to promote responsible drinking for 5th and 6th class students, with parents' involvement			7			7
• Education programmes should include mental health, personal development and youth culture			4			4
• Age-appropriate education programme with a focus on choice, responsibility and trust					3	3
Peer-mentoring programmes						28
• Talks about alcohol from teenagers for 5th and 6th class (primary)		10				10
• Peer-mentoring programmes, where older teenagers educate younger ones				8	10	18
Style of programmes						8
• DVDs for primary and second-level schools on alcohol effects, improved talks and teaching of SPHE and CSPE		3				3
• Fortnightly dedicated class on alcohol and drugs				2		2
• One-off class for primary school students				1		1
• Real-life stories on positive role models					0	0
• DVD on effects of alcohol					2	2
Role of schools						14
• Better school campaigns that include young people in planning			0			0
• Schools more proactive			1			1
• School policy to make contract around not drinking			4			4
• Have clear information for alcohol (e.g. limits, measures)			6			6
• Drink Awareness Week in schools				3		3

Table 4 (continued)

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
General						9
• Better education in media				1		1
• Adult courses on more awareness of teenage drinking					0	0
• Opportunities outside school for young people to discuss their experiences of alcohol				3		3
• Access to counselling/ dedicated student counsellor for young people				2	3	5

The call for more education on alcohol came in many guises. It would appear that there is a need for more, alternatively formatted, creative and realistic education on alcohol, to be delivered by professionals who are understanding and respectful of young people.

Theme 4: Law enforcement

Although there might appear to be overlap between the workshops on 'the legal age' and 'law enforcement', a conscious decision was taken to hold separate workshops on these themes. Based on the 'post-it' notes, where the participants could identify the themes for the workshops, it was apparent that a large number of people wanted to discuss 'the legal age' specifically, but they also wanted to discuss more general issues on the law or law enforcement, such as the role of the Gardaí, the importance of ID/age cards and the penalties or punishment for young people who were caught drinking underage and those adults who chose to serve them alcohol. Depending on the number of 'post-its' related to each theme, separate workshops were held where appropriate.

The importance of enforcing existing laws or any new legislation in this area was considered of significant importance (see Figure 7 and Table 5). Most notably, there was a call for an enforced ID system in pubs and clubs, where only one age card - the Garda age card - should be accepted. This ID system should be electronically and centrally controlled, include a photograph and be compulsory for 12-25 year-olds.

Figure 7: Law enforcement - Total vote outcome

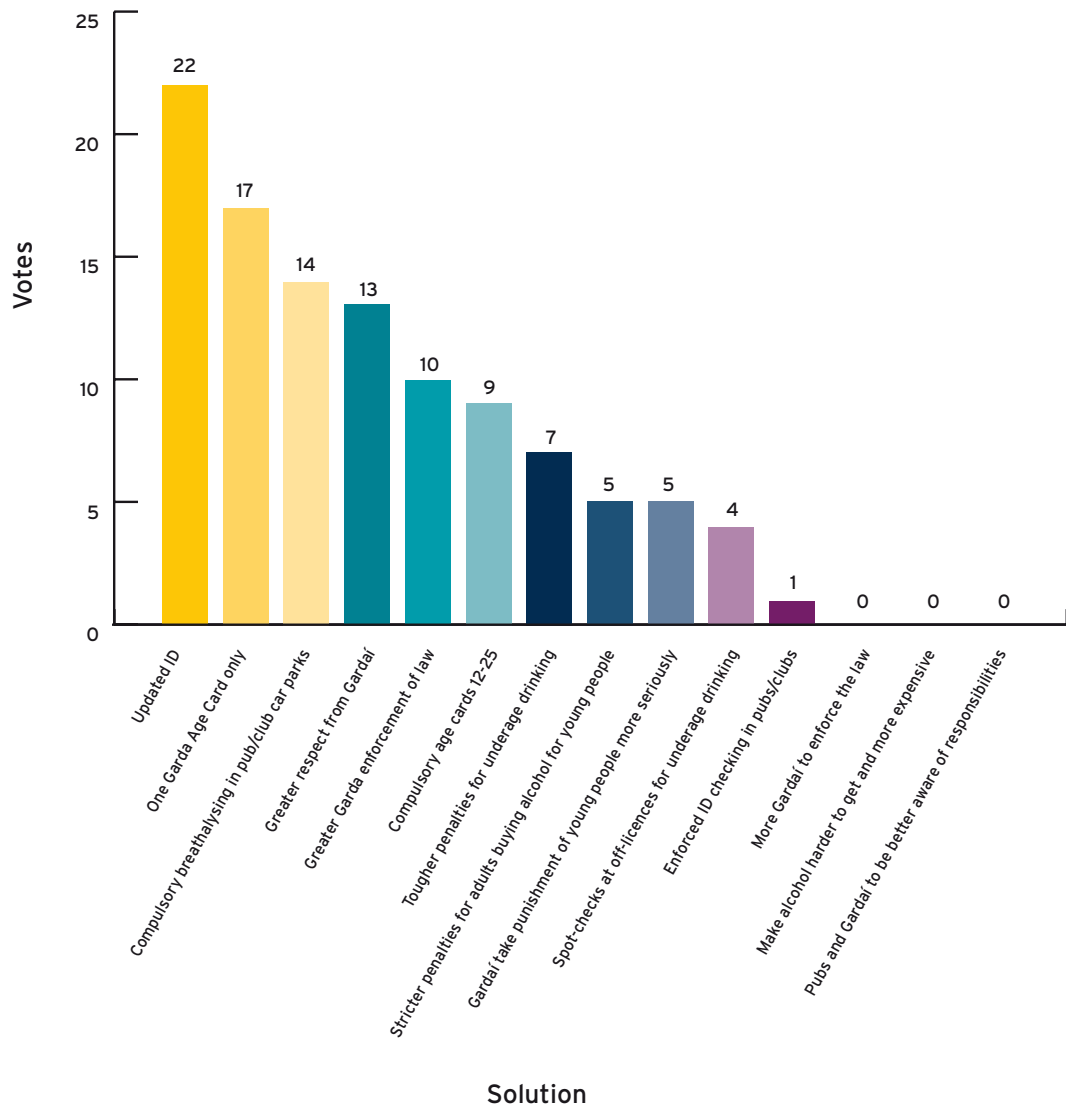


Table 5: Law enforcement - Voting by location

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
ID						49
• Enforced ID checking in pubs/clubs		1				1
• One single, tamper-proof Garda age card accepted as ID		1	11		5	17
• Updated ID system where a photo comes up on a central database				22		22
• Age cards should be compulsory, from 12-25 years	7	2				9

Table 5 (continued)

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
Penalties						12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stricter penalties for adults buying alcohol for young people 		5				5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tougher penalties for underage drinkers, e.g. fine, community service 		7				7
Role of Gardaí						28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Gardaí to enforce the law 		0				0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardaí to take punishment more seriously and underage drinkers get JLO 					5	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardaí and adults should show more respect to teenagers 				13		13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater enforcement where Gardaí bring underage drinkers home to their parents 			10			10
Other						18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory breathalysing on coming out of bar/club car park 				14		14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make alcohol harder to get and more expensive 				0		0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pubs/off-licences/public/Gardaí to be better aware of responsibilities 		0				0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers outside off-licences to stop adults buying alcohol for under-18s 					4	4

Young people also felt that there should be tougher penalties for underage drinkers, which might include community service or a fine. There was ridicule of the current system where it is perceived that Gardaí turn a blind eye to underage drinking and even when young people are caught drinking; to quote one young person, 'They [Gardaí] don't even tell your parents - just let you off with a warning. They don't care really'. The participants felt that 'young people totally know they can get away with it so there is no incentive not to drink from a legal point of view - nothing's going to happen'. In short, young people felt that the Gardaí needed to take punishment of underage drinking more seriously, but also needed to respect young people, which, it was felt, they currently do not.

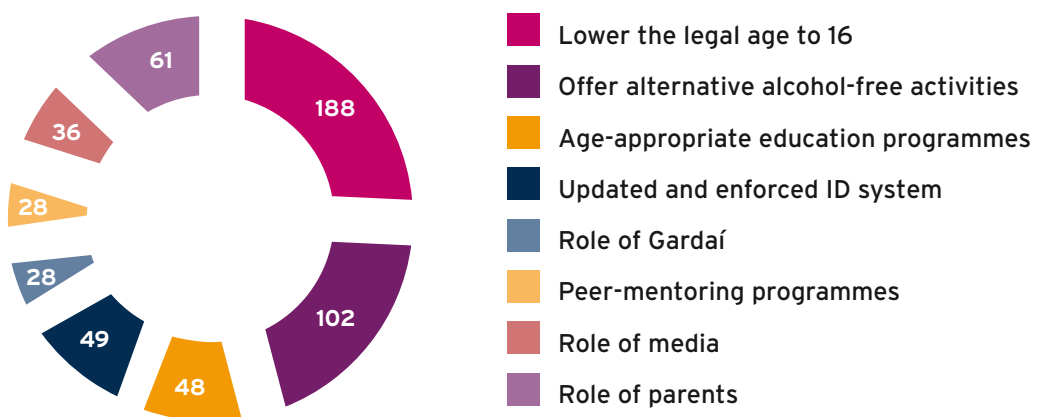
3 Key solutions to alcohol misuse identified and prioritised

The participants had a number of opportunities to put forward solutions to alcohol misuse for consideration and to prioritise their choices, including:

- choosing two solutions for the post-it notes to inform the agenda;
- putting forward solutions in each workshop;
- putting forward and agreeing the Top 3 solutions within each workshop;
- voting with 'sticky dots' on the most important solutions to alcohol misuse.

The key themes that emerged from this process have been identified in Chapter 2. Based on the outcomes of the 'sticky dot' vote, a number of key solutions were identified and prioritised as what young people consider the 'most important' solutions to alcohol misuse. Figure 8 shows the Top 8 solutions as voted on by all 257 young people in the 5 locations. The numbers in Figure 8 represent the number of 'sticky dot' votes given to each solution from a total of 745 votes cast. The table in Appendix 2 shows the outcomes of the full 'sticky dot' voting.

Figure 8: 8 prioritised solutions to alcohol misuse



In order of importance, the 8 solutions are ranked as follows:

1. Lower the legal age of drinking alcohol to 16

The idea to lower the legal age of drinking alcohol to 16 or to have a 'safe-limit' drinking policy for 16+ year-olds was mooted in every venue with the exception of Athlone. (The majority of participants in Athlone (72%) voted to keep the legal age of drinking at 18 and to focus on issues such as better education in schools, alternative facilities for young people, compulsory education for young people and general cultural change.) With that exception, lowering the legal age of drinking alcohol was suggested as the most important solution to alcohol misuse, accounting for 16% of all 'sticky dot' votes across the 5 locations. While some participants felt that the age should simply be lowered to 16 without exception, there was a more significant move towards one of two solutions:

- An electronic ID card that would allow young people over the age of 16 a 'safe number' of alcoholic drinks of any nature per night. Indeed, in Sligo it was suggested that a 'safe limit' card should be compulsory for young people aged 16-21 to help combat 'binge drinking'.

- A two-tiered ID system where young people under the age of 16 could drink beer or drinks with less than 5% alcoholic content. Again, this would be monitored using a computerised central database system that was connected to the Garda age card, which is suggested as the only acceptable form of ID.

Young people insisted that alcohol misuse was not just a 'young people's problem', but rather a cultural problem in Ireland as a whole. Lowering the legal age of drinking alcohol to 16 was suggested in the context of the need for overall cultural change. It was their assertion that 'alcohol' has become a major focus of young people's lives because of its illegality and allowing young people to drink socially and safely in pubs from the age of 16 would be a significant step towards reducing the 'focus' or 'buzz' that 'drinking illegally' currently enjoys in youth culture.

Some of the specific suggestions from participants are included in Box 1:

Box 1: Practical suggestions for lowering the legal age for alcohol consumption

- All young people aged 16-21 should have an ID card with a permitted allowance of alcohol. This would be linked to a central computerised system that you cannot tamper with and should be linked to paying for drinks.
- Increase the price of cheap beers and set prices according to the percentage of alcohol.
- Allow 16-17 year-olds into pubs without drinking - barred if caught drinking.
- 'Safe limit' card for young people aged 16+, where:
 - 2-3 alcoholic drinks allowed;
 - anyone who abuses this should be barred.
- Under-18s should be allowed into concerts and alcohol should be served in a separate area or have a proper ID system in place.

2. Offer alternative alcohol-free facilities

The outcomes of the discussion on the importance of providing alternative alcohol-free facilities to young people were outlined in Chapter 2. While providing alternative facilities was offered as a general solution, youth cafés were identified as a particular facility that could potentially provide a realistic alternative to 'the pub' or 'going drinking'. In addition to stating that more youth cafés were needed all over Ireland, several other criteria were deemed necessary in order to make the youth cafés a success. Effectively, youth cafés or facilities for young people need to be:

- alcohol-free;
- open on weekend nights until at least 11pm or 12am;
- youth-friendly and youth-led;
- providing sports facilities, including:
 - skateboarding
 - swimming
 - rugby
 - horse-riding
 - dancing
 - basketball
 - girls' teams
- running affordable discos and/or cinemas;
- serviced by public transport, especially in rural areas;
- well advertised.

It was also suggested that a representative group of teenagers be established to review youth cafés and make recommendations on how they should, or could, be run. A recap of the practical suggestions made are given in Box 2:

Box 2: Practical suggestions on alternative alcohol-free facilities for teenagers

- There needs to be more youth cafés that are free, comfortable and attractive, and have facilities such as:
 - DVDs;
 - Internet access;
 - karaoke;
 - music events;
 - counselling (at certain times);
 - games such as pool.
- Establish a group of teenagers with different interests and of different ages to review existing youth cafés and make recommendations on how they should be run.
- Facilities for young people should be open on Friday and Saturday nights and should be well publicised.
- Sports and gyms are really important, for boys in particular.
- There needs to be special buses for young people to and from discos and clubs, preferably with Garda-vetted drivers.
- Advertise facilities on:
 - websites;
 - posters in schools;
 - leaflets;
 - national and local radio.

3. Role of parents

Although the 'role of parents' only came up as a specific workshop in Cork, the importance of the role that parents can play in the solutions to alcohol misuse came up constantly in workshop discussions on 'education', 'family, friends and community' and a number of other topics.

The role of parents was seen as two-fold:

- The need to be '*understanding and have realistic expectations, especially around special occasions*'. Young people felt that their parents need to meet them half-way on matters of trust and to set reasonable boundaries around drinking. There was a sense that most young people would prefer to be open with their parents about the fact that they drink, but that they needed their parents to be open-minded and understanding for this to happen.
- Parents need to take responsibility for their own behaviour by setting a good example with their own use of alcohol and also for knowing the whereabouts of their children. In Athlone, 18% of the votes favoured a compulsory 'parent education' programme in which parents could learn about the issues of alcohol and young people.

Young people also noted that many parents were in denial about their children drinking, choosing to ignore the problem rather than acknowledge it. In general, young people felt that parents had an important role to play in teaching them about alcohol and its consequences, and in setting an example that would help change the 'alcohol culture' in Ireland.

Some practical suggestions from participants on the role of parents are given in Box 3:

Box 3: Practical suggestions on the role of parents

- Parents need to meet young people half-way and to be understanding and set reasonable boundaries.
- Parents need to take responsibility for and give good example to young people, e.g.
 - give advice on safe drinking;
 - take responsibility for their children;
 - attend compulsory talk (parents and young people) on a parents' education programme;
 - know what their children are doing;
 - set a good example themselves with alcohol.
- Parents must trust young people, even if they have had a bad experience with their other children.

4. Age-appropriate education programmes

The dominant solution emerging from the numerous discussions on education was the idea of an 'age-appropriate education programme' in every school year, starting as early as 5th or 6th class in primary school. As well as suggesting that young people should be involved in planning these programmes, participants also felt that the education programmes should include:

- education about safe drinking and the consequences of unsafe drinking;
- promotion of responsible drinking;
- information on mental health and personal development, as well as youth culture;
- a focus on choice, responsibility and trust.

Alcohol is such a significant element of youth culture today that participants felt that it warranted having a few classes on the topic, appropriate to their age, every year. This was so that the message could be re-emphasised each year. It was important to the participants that these classes did not become an opportunity for teachers to spread a 'don't drink' message since this was considered unrealistic and a *'turn-off'*. It was considered vital that *'an objective professional'*, rather than a teacher, should deliver these classes if they were to be successful.

Some practical suggestions from participants on making education programmes effective are given in Box 4:

Box 4: Practical suggestions on effective education programmes

- Education programmes need to start in 5th or 6th class.
- There needs to be different programmes for different years, e.g.
 - 1st year: guest speakers, 6th year mentors, scare tactics, pictures.
 - 2nd/3rd years: dangers and consequences of alcohol and the medical effects, as this is when young people really start to drink.
 - 5th/6th years: subtle message/beware of drugs.
- Fortnightly classes on alcohol and drugs, with age-appropriate messages.
- Age-appropriate education classes should focus on choice, responsibility and trust.
- Programmes need to be ongoing and part of SPHE.
- Programmes to include guest speakers with experience, e.g. doctor, youth worker, alcohol misuser.

5. Updated and enforced ID system

The importance of the ID system was closely connected to the discussion on reducing the legal age limit of drinking to 16 years. However, in addition, young people felt that there needed to be stricter enforcement of ID checking and also that pubs and clubs which permitted underage drinking on their premises should have stricter penalties imposed on them, such as higher insurance premiums or the temporary closure of their premises.

Unequivocally, young people felt that only one form of age card should be accepted - the Garda age card - and that it should:

- be made more tamper-proof;
- be the size of a credit card, to fit in a wallet;
- include a photograph;
- be attached to a central database, which is monitored by the Gardaí.

Some practical suggestions from participants on ID and law enforcement are given in Box 5:

Box 5: Practical suggestions on ID and law enforcement

- Garda age cards should be the only form of accepted ID and they should be made more tamper-proof.
- Updated ID system with passport/credit card size swipe card, which has a photograph and is connected to a central database.
- Stricter enforcement of ID checks.
- Stricter punishment for using fake ID.

6. Role of Gardaí

Participants expected that the Gardaí would play a significant role in monitoring any new centralised ID system or the proposed two-tiered ID system whereby young people

are permitted to drink alcohol with less than 5% alcoholic content. In general, young people also expected that the Gardaí should enforce the current law and it is perceived that they do not. In addition to the need to show respect to young people and as part of showing that respect, participants felt that the Gardaí needed to take underage drinking more seriously and at the very least bring young people home to their parents when caught. In keeping with this thinking, there was some support for stricter punishment, such as community service or a Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) for young people if they were caught drinking underage.

Some practical suggestions from participants on the role of the Gardaí are given in Box 6:

Box 6: Practical suggestions on the role of the Gardaí

- Gardaí need to take the issue of underage drinking more seriously, e.g.
 - greater presence of Gardaí at pubs/clubs, especially to check ID;
 - Gardaí to take underage drinkers home to their parents/to the station, rather than ignore issue or let off with a warning;
 - harsher punishments for those caught, e.g. JLO or community service.
- Gardaí should follow up on where young people source alcohol and stop it at source.
- Gardaí should show more respect to young people and they will get more respect back in return.

7. Peer-mentoring programmes

The idea that peer-mentoring programmes could work as a solution to alcohol misuse was prevalent in 3 out of the 5 locations. The main thinking behind the idea was that younger 'young people', especially those in primary school, hold older 'young people' in high regard and this could have a positive impact on their behaviour. The key components of the peer-mentoring programme would need to include:

- participants on the programme, including mentors, would be voluntary;
- the programme should start in 5th or 6th class;
- mentoring should include real-life stories, not always focused on alcohol;
- mentoring should promote responsible drinking.

'Sticky dot' votes for peer-mentoring programmes received 4% of overall votes, the same as for the importance of the role of the Gardaí.

Some practical suggestions from participants on peer-mentoring are given in Box 7:

Box 7: Practical suggestions on peer education/mentoring

- 'Big Brother/Big Sister' mentoring programmes should be introduced in schools, e.g.
 - 5th/6th-year students mentor 1st-year students;
 - teenagers should give talks to students in 5th and 6th class on the dangers of alcohol;
 - give a balanced view to show how you can have a good time without alcohol;
 - needs to be a connection between mentor and person being mentored.
- Participation in programmes should be voluntary.

8. Role of the media

The topic of 'the media and advertising' was the subject of a specific workshop in both Cork and Dublin, although it was also mentioned in a number of other workshops. In keeping with the 2006 research on inequality and the stereotyping of young people (Devlin, 2006), participants felt strongly that they were negatively stereotyped by the media and that this portrayal should be swapped for a message about responsible drinking. They called on the media to be fairer with their coverage because *'all young people are not out there getting drunk'*.

Currently, it is perceived that *'alcohol is everywhere in the media'* and Ireland is happily portrayed as a pub culture. The media also highlight celebrities or sports stars that get off lightly for alcohol misuse, sending confusing messages to young people.

An idea that was well supported in Dublin centred on short advertisements or films being made by young people on real-life experiences with alcohol. These would be used to put other young people off misusing alcohol.

Some practical suggestions from participants on the role of the media are given in Box 8:

Box 8: Practical suggestions on the role of the media

- Films or documentaries featuring case studies on the effects of alcohol misuse on a family should be made by young people for other young people.
- Visual warnings should be placed on cans/bottles and in off-licences.
- Be realistic with messages, e.g.
 - 'It could be you!'
 - 'Everybody is not getting drunk' - portray a balanced view.
- Use sports jerseys to promote alcohol avoidance.
- Make non-alcoholic drinks less expensive.

4 Additional issues
identified

Although not necessarily in the top ranking of what young people considered the most important solutions to alcohol misuse, the following ideas were prevalent in workshop discussions and received a number of 'sticky dot' votes in the final voting.

Youth Culture and peer pressure

The discussions on youth culture and peer pressure possibly provided the source of most disagreement among young people at the consultations. Some young people saw peer pressure as the main reason why young people drink, while others felt strongly that young people have to take responsibility for themselves and not blame others. While it was argued that *'you would need a lot of confidence to say No'*, many young people agreed that you *'don't have to drink - if your friends are your real friends, they won't pressurise you into drinking or anything else you don't want to do'*.

However, some young people admitted that they drank *'just to feel part of the group'*, while others drank *'cos it gives you a bit of a buzz and something to look forward to at the end of the week'*.

The issue of 'self-confidence' dominated these discussions and permeated many others. While some argued that you cannot teach confidence since 'it comes from home, school and friends', others felt that they could be better supported by self-confidence classes, teachers or school counsellors. There was particular support in Dublin for the introduction of classes on 'self-confidence' in schools, which, like the alcohol education classes, would be delivered by an 'objective professional' rather than a teacher.

There was also significant disagreement on whether or not drinking was simply part of today's youth culture. Opinion was equally divided, with many feeling it would *always* be part of youth culture, while others argued that it did not have to be if you did not want it to be and that if there was wider cultural and social change, alcohol could lose its place of importance.

Advertising

Although young people were aware that there were many effective and 'catchy' advertisements about alcohol, they were quite insistent that these ads did not make them drink any more than they would otherwise or did not make them choose a particular brand over another. There was little support for a blanket ban on ads for alcohol, although there was more support for 'shock tactic' ads to put people off 'binge drinking'. The ads used for road safety and quitting smoking were cited as effective examples.

Insurance

Although it was not a significant issue, the cost of insurance for young drivers was mentioned on a number of occasions. Participants felt that 'cheaper insurance' should be offered as an incentive to drivers who did not drink. It is notable that this solution received 12% of the vote in Sligo, where more of the delegates came from rural locations.

5 Conclusions

A youth-led and youth-friendly consultation process was devised to provide a safe space where young people could freely express their opinions on the solutions to alcohol misuse without being influenced by any other agenda. This report is framed so as to accurately reflect those opinions and views expressed by participants at the consultations.

Despite the diversity and number of young people (257) in attendance at five different locations across the country, there was common agreement on the four main areas of focus when considering the solutions to alcohol misuse. These were the legal age for drinking alcohol, alternative alcohol-free facilities, education and law enforcement. Most notably, a substantial majority agreed on two key solutions to young people misusing alcohol:

- lower the legal age of drinking alcohol to 16;
- offer alternative alcohol-free facilities for young people, especially youth cafés.

The consultations seeking young people's opinions on the solutions to alcohol misuse were extremely well attended by teenagers, aged 12-18, all of whom were engaged and keen to express their opinions. The outcomes and recommendations from the participants have given us considerable food for thought on this important issue. While all of these outcomes may not be in keeping with current thinking or research on the issue, there is little doubt that there are very clear messages and recommendations from young people emerging from these consultations.

The Minister for Children recognised that the voice of young people was the only one missing in the debate on the solutions to alcohol misuse. Ensuring that this voice was included in the debate was the important first step. It was the expressed hope of the young participants in the consultations that their voice and opinions would now be taken into equal consideration as the all-important next step.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Outcomes of Consultations

As outlined in Chapter 1 under the headings 'Methodology' and 'Agenda for consultations', the participants had the opportunity to identify the key issues for the agenda to be discussed in workshop settings. Discussion on these issues produced a number of relevant points. Before the end of each workshop, the facilitators asked the participants to identify their Top 3 recommendations, or most important key points, under each heading and these would be presented to the main group for voting.

We now present, in detail, the overall agenda for workshops, relevant points from those workshops and the Top 3 recommendations from each, location by location.

CONSULTATION 1 - ATHLONE

Location: Athlone

Venue: SAS Raddison Hotel, Athlone

Date: 8 October 2007

Issues identified by participants for discussion in workshops

- Media and advertising
- Education
- Facilities
- Information
- Confidence and peer pressure
- Legal age
- The Law
- Family, friends and community

WORKSHOP 1: MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

Relevant points from workshop

- Sports sponsorship:
 - Heroes promoting alcohol
 - 'No smoking' on jerseys - maybe use jerseys to promote alcohol avoidance
 - sports involvement - not allowed to drink before the game, but after the game everyone goes to the pub
 - expected to go to the pub that sponsors jerseys and team
 - ban glamorous advertisements of alcohol
 - use media to promote healthy attitude towards alcohol
 - ban alcohol advertisements and sports sponsorship
- Alcohol:
 - not main sponsors of sport - make logos small
 - message about responsible drinking (in sports ads)
 - make non-alcoholic drinks less expensive
 - make ads less glamorous
 - local issue - e.g. only one shop/pub
 - healthy sponsorship

- Portrayal of alcohol in school books:
 - negative stereotyping of young people
 - maybe show the dangers and effects of one night's drinking on the liver
 - messages need to be clear
 - more real-life stories
 - how do you know 'the one too many' if you don't go past it?
 - three drinks as binge drinking is not a realistic message
 - messages that should be shown:
 - » should be balanced if showing young people;
 - » have drink in moderation;
 - » more positive images of young people;
 - » may drink, but not cause trouble;
 - » more Diageo-type ads (drink responsibly);
 - » more facts on alcohol use.
- Portrayal of Irish in media:
 - pub culture
 - in other countries, greater respect towards alcohol
 - eat and drink
 - responsible drinking
 - ads for alcohol are so catchy
 - alcohol everywhere
 - portrayal of superstars and celebrities who drink and get off lightly

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Sports sponsorship - superstars and celebrities need to take more responsibility.
2. Portrayal of young people needs to change.
3. Awareness of real situations for young people.

WORKSHOP 2: EDUCATION

Relevant points from workshop

- Education:
 - repeat sessions in an interesting way
 - pupil involvement
 - broaden education into media
 - SPHE - alcohol abuse, one class
 - talks from recovering alcoholic
 - first-hand experiences - hits home
 - SPHE - book guest speakers
 - emphasis on the size of the problem, e.g. drug user, alcoholic, pictures
- Amount of education:
 - there is not enough education on alcohol in schools
 - education from 1st year onwards
- Style of education:
 - graphic pictures for older students (scare tactics)
 - target different age groups:
 - 1st year:
 - » use scare tactics on alcohol misuse, but not to put off drink *entirely*.

2nd year:

- » as part of SPHE module;
- » guest speakers;
- » young person with experience;
- » show effects on families and friends.

3rd year+:

- » dedicated day for each year;
- » follow-up class;
- » statistics on misuse;
- » older people should show a better example.

- Education on:
 - limits/recommended intake (didn't help some)
 - image of what you look like when drunk
 - emphasise what alcohol can do to you
 - parents setting good example on alcohol
- Parents' information evening:
 - hold separate to parent/teacher meeting, at a convenient time. for 1-2 hours
 - guest speaker with real-life experience and Government official
 - advice on problem
 - parents need to know how to approach the situation, how to cope with a child using alcohol
 - parents' role to educate their children on alcohol
 - role of parents in secondary school not as influential

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 1st/2nd year education programme. As part of SPHE - ongoing (one topic). At the beginning of year and end of year, monthly guest speakers (young people) to talk about experience of alcohol and the effects it had on them.
2. 3rd year programme. Dedicated day: guest speakers with first-hand experience, e.g. alcohol user, doctor, youth worker. Have ongoing follow-up sessions, not necessarily from teacher - class decides on person to deliver course.
3. Parents' education programme for students in primary school. Parents' role to educate children of this age. Guest speaker and Government speaker to advise on problem and how to cope with it in a non-threatening way.

WORKSHOP 3: FACILITIES

Relevant points from workshop

- Need discos that:
 - have adult supervision and bright lights
 - have adults and young people socialising together
 - don't allow to go overboard with drink
 - only allow certain types of drink, not shots or alco-pops
- Discos for 16-18 year-olds – negatives:
 - often there is no transport
 - people drink on bus
 - very few turn up sober
 - associate discos with getting drunk
 - don't let you in if drunk
 - there are often fights

- people get sick (on bus home)
- 15-18 year-olds are too young for night clubs and too old for discos
- Offer other alternatives, e.g.
 - camping
 - pool/cards
 - involvement in sports
 - dancing/bowling

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Offer alternatives, e.g. bowling, camping, pool/cards.
2. Role of other young people, e.g. messages about not having to drink.
3. Bring people with you, e.g. adults and young people socialising together, or younger and older 'young people' mixing.

WORKSHOP 4: INFORMATION

Relevant points from workshop

- Information in schools – very informal
- Drinking starts from 1st year onwards – not enough information on dangers, e.g.
 - drinks get spiked
 - people get raped
- Units of alcohol:
 - very hard to understand
 - what is a unit?
 - units change
- Sports sponsorship and drink companies, e.g. Heineken Cup, Guinness Hurling
- Information on the dangers of smoking:
 - very visual
 - scares you (not always effective)
- Soap programmes all centred around pubs
- Binge drinking glamorised
- Need warnings, highlight risks, e.g. liver disease, kills brain cells
- Parents:
 - most don't know what young people get up to
 - parents buying alcohol for young people
- Community – no places for young people
- Underage discos:
 - security no good
 - people still get drunk
 - should be organised by young people who work with young people, e.g. No Name Clubs
- Parent nights on:
 - how to deal with their children drinking
 - what can parents do if young people drink?
 - don't involve parents in organising events
- Schools:
 - personal development 1st year
 - youth workers/counsellors to give talks
 - like sex education modules
 - SPHE 1st – 3rd years

- Religion 4th – 6th years (social issues)
- Transition Year – Young Social Innovators (YSI) project on alcohol abuse
- Sources of information:
 - websites don't work
 - young people need more access to counsellors
 - more guidance counsellors in schools
 - phone/text services free
 - look at examples around sex, health and smoking

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More talks and information in schools – specialist groups from 1st - 2nd year.
2. Should have more alcohol-free environments for young people, organised by youth organisations.
3. Information and advertising on underage drinking should be prioritised and with campaigns similar to quit smoking and teenage pregnancy.

WORKSHOP 5: CONFIDENCE AND PEER PRESSURE

Relevant points from workshop

- Think about why young people decide to drink – stress? peer pressure?
 - drink to feel part of the group
 - you need a lot of confidence to refuse drink
 - learn to be your own person, be assertive
 - talks in schools from youth workers, recovering alcoholics, rehab centres, older teenagers
 - parents should help children to socialise at a young age
 - 16-17 – legal age for beer or other low-alcohol drinks
 - 18 – legal age for spirits
 - how can you teach confidence? It comes from home, friends, school
 - primary school – positive encouragement
 - peer pressure – just an excuse
 - drink gives you confidence, nothing holding you back, gives you confidence to talk to people
 - can lead to fights
 - a really bad experience will stop you repeating it
 - a few drinks are something to look forward to, a bit of a buzz

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Split opinion in group – some think it is OK to have a few drinks to make you more confident (from 16-17 years), but some disagree.
2. More emphasis in primary and secondary schools on encouraging young people and children to build up their confidence. Also, talks on alcohol and confidence in primary and secondary schools from experts, recovering alcoholics, rehab workers and older teenagers.
3. Peer pressure is sometimes used as an excuse.

WORKSHOP 6: LEGAL AGE

Relevant points from workshop

- Increase the legal age for drinking to 19-21 years:
 - young people won't be as friendly with 19-20 year-olds so won't be exposed to drinking so early
 - if the legal age is higher, people might start later
 - 21 is too old
 - it wouldn't stop alcohol misuse, only make it harder to get
 - if we increase the legal age, what happens to 18-year-olds who are already allowed to drink
 - impact on student social life
 - doesn't work in USA
 - why should college life centre around alcohol?
 - difficult to enforce, non-compliance by pubs due to loss of profits
 - more about addressing the whole culture of alcohol use
 - more people drinking on the streets
- Lower the legal age:
 - if you are able to drink at 16-17, you are likely to respect alcohol and be more responsible, less likely to abuse it
 - less likely to make a big deal of it
 - can drink in a more protected environment
 - if you are allowed to do it, you are less likely to binge drink
 - if you can drink at 16-17, there is a chance you will buy it for younger children
 - part of the fun of drinking underage is that it is illegal
 - could cause medical problems
- Legalise alcohol with low alcohol content for 16-17s and hard spirits for 18s+:
 - difficult to police
 - if you could buy drink yourself, you wouldn't need anyone else to buy it for you
- Keep the legal age the same (18 years):
 - medically and physically, it is better for you
 - in some ways, legal age doesn't matter – already have fake ID
- Young people start with spirits since they can be hidden

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Keep legal age for drinking at 18.
2. Lower it to 17. Or reduce legal age to drink beer to 17 and keep legal age to drink spirits at 18.
3. Increase legal age to 20.

WORKSHOP 7: THE LAW

Relevant points from workshop

- Controlled drinking in areas for young people
- Breathalyse young people before discos
- Older people buying alcohol
- ID check
- Drinking and driving
- Underage drinking and prosecution/punishments:
 - nothing really happens
 - get cautioned, on probation for 8 months, not very effective but does work

- it's not enforced
- it's not strict enough
- just brought home
- USA have detox cells
- no follow-up
- Gardaí not interested
- in rural areas, Gardaí have to bring you home. If you're over 18, they can just put you in a cell
- ID
 - can get fake ID easily
 - not examined properly
 - clubs let you in so easily
 - don't check ID inside
 - young people working in bars
 - age cards should be used more
 - brighter lights at doors
 - should have stricter cards that apply to over-18s as well
- Culture
 - adults set example
 - do team functions in community halls instead of pubs
 - manager shouldn't let cup be brought into pubs
 - sporting activities shouldn't be focused on pubs
 - stop underage play with seniors because of drinking culture
 - responsibility for giving good example by captains, etc.
 - communities and family have responsibilities
- Breathalysing underage drinkers isn't right, shouldn't be allowed.
- Drink driving:
 - mini-buses in pubs
 - 17-year-olds with provisional licences shouldn't be drinking by themselves
 - driving/road safety
 - Gardaí talks/videos
 - young people don't drink and drive as much

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Underage drinking and prosecution should be better enforced and have stricter penalties.
2. Community events should not revolve around pubs. Pubs shouldn't be seen as family places.
3. Age cards should be compulsory for 15-25 year-olds.

WORKSHOP 8: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY

Relevant points from workshop

- Parents should know the whereabouts of their children
- Honest relationship between young people and people in authority
- Naïve attitude within society about this problem
- Change is needed in society
- The problem isn't young people – it's the general misuse by adults. Also, a positive example is a solution

- There's too much freedom and people need to be given a fine or community service if caught drinking
- Arrest any young person with alcohol and bring them to their parents
- If we are given more freedom to drink (e.g. with our parents at home), we would be less inclined to binge drink with friends
- Solve family problems
- Trust young people
- Parents to give advice on safe and responsible drinking
- Young people should be punished by a warning. If it's a habit, bring to parent
- Everything is celebrated with drink and in the pubs
- Compulsory talks for parents and young people
- Drink is easy to get
- Learning to drink responsibly at family events is a good thing
- Parents need to know what young people are doing

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents need to take responsibility for and give good example to young people, e.g.
 - give advice on safe drinking;
 - take responsibility for young people;
 - attend compulsory talk (parents and young people) on a parents' education programme on alcohol;
 - know what young people are doing.
2. Alcohol-free activities for young people (no age limits), with information and advice.
3. There needs to be a cultural change – alcohol is easy to get and everything in Ireland is celebrated with drink.

CONSULTATION 2 - SLIGO

Location: Sligo

Venue: Glasshouse Hotel, Sligo

Date: 9 October 2007

Issues identified by participants for discussion in workshops

- General issues (2 workshops)
- Lack of things to do/Facilities
- Law enforcement
- Family and friends
- Legal age (2 workshops)
- Education and information

WORKSHOP 1: GENERAL ISSUES I

Relevant points from workshop

- There is no actual solution - drinking is accepted as normal
- If allowed drink at home, then don't want to go and get drink - parental supervision
- Have to go through a phase of wanting alcohol
- Parents need to respect young people
- Lack of facilities
- Too much advertising of drink
- Attitudes of adults to drink - they set a bad example
- No sanctions
- Young people have a responsibility to and for themselves
- Need to have Government spending money on facilities for young people
- Video/DVD on effects of alcohol
- If facilities more local, more difficult to drink
- Show how to have a good time without drinking
- Attitude of young people:
 - you don't have to conform
 - young people need to talk about it and know there is a problem
 - be realistic - things take time
- Media:
 - too much advertising of drink
 - do ads like the road safety/quit smoking campaigns
 - don't condemn young people
- Parents and family:
 - parents need to be educated
 - parents need to set a good example
 - parents need to be aware of the effects of their behaviour on young people
 - parents could teach young people how to drink responsibly

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents need to:
 - be understanding;
 - set a good example;
 - be open-minded.
2. Society:
 - the media should play a role – use shock tactics;
 - change attitudes towards drink;
 - try to change young people's attitudes.
3. Education with young people:
 - CSPE/SPHE focus on alcohol – improve teaching;
 - teach about the world as it is;
 - ads;
 - improved talks.

WORKSHOP 2: GENERAL ISSUES II

- Irish attitudes to alcohol:
 - Ireland renowned for drinking to excess – its true!
 - alcohol is everywhere. Adults and older gay people give bad example in drinking
- Why young people drink:
 - like it
 - feel part of the crowd
 - gives you confidence
 - peer pressure
 - it's your own choice
- How to change Ireland:
 - put up price
 - lower price limit
 - would work on really cheap beers
 - mixed opinion on alcohol generally
 - units for 16 and over
- Coupon card with little boxes ticked off by bar staff
- Good to be introduced to small amounts (sips) of alcohol from mid-teens
- 16s+ allowed to play in bands in pubs
- Hardly anything but the pub in many small towns
- If you're not allowed in pubs, you go to the fields or lane
- Show shock drink driving ads in 5th/6th class
- Bring teenagers in to talk to 5th and 6th class
- DVD about effects of alcohol in primary (5th/6th) and second-level schools
- Advertising
- Under-18s not allowed in pubs after 9pm
- Nothing else to do
- Stop adults buying drink for young people

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education:
 - education and information about consequences;
 - dealing with peers when you don't want a drink;
 - being safe around drinks.
2. Broader community:
 - pubs/off-licences;
 - being aware.
3. Parents:
 - tricks;
 - awareness;
 - consequences.

WORKSHOP 3: LACK OF THINGS TO DO/FACILITIES

Relevant points from workshop

- More sports facilities needed:
 - badminton, tennis, rugby, water sports
 - young people will pay – but not too much
 - halls need to be big enough
 - need dance, yoga teachers, etc.
- Look at other cultures:
 - allowed to drink from a young age
 - the fact that Irish young people are not allowed to drink makes them want to drink
- Young people need more information about facilities:
 - websites
 - flyers/leaflets
 - advertising in schools on noticeboards
- Transport:
 - special buses to pick up young people for discos and clubs, max. cost €2-€5
 - just for young people
 - Foróige to set up a bus in Grange

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More youth cafés/health cafés open in evenings and at weekends.
2. Transport – special buses for young people to and from discos and clubs, with Garda-vetted drivers.
3. Advertise facilities on:
 - websites;
 - posters in schools;
 - leaflets;
 - national and local radio.

WORKSHOP 4: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Relevant points from workshop

- Make alcohol harder to get:
 - increase price (but it doesn't work for cigarettes)
 - makes it more desirable
 - makes underage drinking more appealing

- More strict about ID:
 - not policed properly
 - publicans, bouncers, etc. to be more observant
 - fake ID easy to get
 - bouncers allow people in
 - financial issue for pubs and clubs
 - increased Garda raids
 - training bouncers
 - easier for girls to get in (make-up)
 - enforcing Garda ID might discriminate against foreign people with no age card
 - easy to get alcohol in restaurants, hard to have police at weddings
 - digital IDs
- Enforce law against adults buying alcohol for young people
- Some get alcohol from their parents:
 - bad parenting
 - parental supervision
 - store alcohol more securely at home
- Other adults:
 - don't take law seriously
 - fines for users and buyers
 - Gardaí have a part to play

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Should be a compulsory age card for 12-25 year-olds.
2. More Gardaí should be available to enforce current law to make more effective.
3. Should be different ages for different types of alcohol.

WORKSHOP 5: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Relevant points from workshop

- Parents should do more to try and prevent young people from drinking:
 - don't let them drink
 - parents should be more strict/more careful
 - parents should take more care of themselves
 - parents should give more leeway
 - encourage parents to get their children to try alcohol and be aware of its effects
- Alcohol available at younger age in other countries
- No places for young people to go
- Should be places for young people to drink
- Have to be 18 to go into pubs – should allow 16-year-olds
- Too many pressures:
 - examples from brothers and sisters
 - exams

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 16-year-olds should be allowed to stay in pubs longer than the current 9pm curfew.
2. Lower cost for car insurance to give some incentive to young people if they don't drink.
3. More café bars or alternatives to pubs available for 16+ year-olds.

WORKSHOP 6: LEGAL AGE I

Relevant points from workshop

- If a young person is caught drinking, make penalty harsher
- Penalty harsher if you are caught on street
- Underage drinker caught and brought to police station
- Police and bouncers don't take legal age seriously
- Police ignore it – worst thing they do is to ask for your name
- Police are often intimidated and avoid situation
- Some people are more afraid of their parents' response rather the police response
- Plainclothes Gardaí outside off-licences to see if people are buying alcohol for young people. If caught, barred from off-license and cautioned
- Example of Germany:
 - age limit for drinking alcohol – 16 for beer/wine, 18 for spirits
 - under-18s need parents' permission to gain access to clubs/pubs
- Not always about alcohol, but socialising with your friends
- ID card allowance of alcohol from 16-21:
 - each person can consume a permitted allowance of alcoholic units
 - determined on basis of age
 - computerised
 - take individual's alcohol tolerance into account
- Increasing the legal age limit would not be accepted or work
- Lowering the legal age limit works in other countries where the culture is more relaxed about drinking, e.g.
 - café bars where young people can socialise with their parents
- Lower the legal age limit to 16-17 for beer and keep it at 18 for spirits and alco-pops

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ID card with permitted allowance of alcohol for 16-21 year-olds. For example, 16-year-old is allowed just 2 units of alcohol in one night. Computerised system in bars/clubs, which would need to be tamper-proof and linked to paying for drinks.
2. Reduce age to drink beer to 17. Anyone under-17 can access pubs/clubs, but is not allowed to drink. A way to continue socialising with older friends.
3. Tougher penalties for underage drinking: any person caught drinking will be taken to police station and their parents will be called to collect them. Young people must do community service and pay a fine of about €500.

WORKSHOP 7: LEGAL AGE II

Relevant points from workshop

- Lower the legal age for drinking to 16:
 - young people might be more mature
 - if it is legal, takes the thrill away
 - less likely to binge drink
 - young people can drink in a safer environment
 - there is a chance people will start earlier
 - there is a chance it won't be accepted
 - in other countries where young people can drink from 16, they are more sophisticated and responsible
 - change patterns of drinking

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ID coupon card for over-16s with 'safe limit' points, ticked by publicans.
2. Talks from teenagers to 5th and 6th classes. Know alcohol effects in primary and secondary schools.
3. Increase the price of cheap beers. Set prices according to percentage of alcohol.

WORKSHOP 8: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Relevant points from workshop

- More information on consequences of drinking, e.g.
 - road deaths
 - organ failure
 - depression
 - pregnancy
 - vandalism/ASBOs
 - shock stories
 - knowing the people involved
- Peer pressure:
 - how to deal with peers when you don't want to drink – 'If they force you, then they're not your friend'
- The role of parents to give a good example
- Young people should be allowed to try alcohol. Allowed in other countries, maybe at 16 years
- Community-based programmes:
 - expected to behave responsibly at 18 years
 - be realistic about messages on alcohol
 - educate adults:
 - » parents
 - » broader community
 - » parents need to know the tricks young people get up to

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education about safe drinking and consequences.
2. DVDs on alcohol effects for primary and second-level schools, improved talks and teaching of SPHE and CSPE.
3. Talks from teenagers for 5th and 6th class (primary) about alcohol.

CONSULTATION 3 - CORK

Location: Cork

Venue: Clarion Hotel, Cork

Date: 16 October 2007

Issues identified by participants for discussion in workshops

- Facilities (2 workshops)
- Media and advertising
- The Law (2 workshops)
- Education (2 workshops)
- Role of parents

WORKSHOP 1: FACILITIES I

Relevant points from workshop

- Clubs or activities on a Friday night until 11pm-12am
- Flood-lit Astroturf pitches
- Very little to do – pub only place to go
- Alternate sports, e.g. soccer, hockey, rugby
- Karaoke and dance mats
- Gym/swimming
- Art
- Sports - especially for boys
- Will facilities stop the drinking?
 - should be youth-led
 - must be presented well
 - relaxed adults running activities
 - accepting/sympathetic/not pushy
 - young people make own rules (realistic) and sign up to them (also parents)
- Youth cafés:
 - Internet/Bebo/MSN
 - should be youth-led
 - really works to stop people drinking
 - mental health and support
 - survey young people in locality – send to schools
- Publicise youth facilities:
 - at Mass
 - posters in shopping centres, schools, Internet, GAA clubs, youth clubs
 - national and local newspapers

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Youth cafés and facilities should be youth-led and activities should appeal to young people.
2. Facilities need to be open on Friday and Saturday nights until 11 or 12 midnight and be well publicised.
3. Sports and gyms are really important, for boys in particular. All matches should be held first thing on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

WORKSHOP 2: FACILITIES II

Relevant points from workshop

- Youth cafés – what they need and/or should be:
 - cinema
 - some people don't like the name 'youth café'
 - comfortable/attractive
 - Internet access
 - on main street
 - in centre of town
 - open late
 - free
 - young person can come in
 - staff should be relaxed, but in control
 - older teenagers helping with running of facility
 - pool table
 - matches/big screens
 - outings
 - table quizzes
 - music events
 - karaoke
 - staff that young people can talk to
 - noticeboards with help lines
 - links to counsellors
 - counselling available at certain times
 - different activities each night to appeal to different people
 - publicise youth cafés widely, e.g. on local radio, in schools, on Internet (Bebo), page on Bebo, text, at Mass, posters in shopping centres, buses, sports clubs
 - youth cafés will not stop drinking, but will reduce it
- Other activities:
 - sports clubs
 - more support for people who are average at sports

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Youth cafés and other facilities will help stop teen drinking.
2. Establish a group of teenagers, with different interests and of different ages, to review existing youth cafés and make recommendations on how they should, or could, be run.
3. More clubs for teenagers, such as sports, dance, art.

WORKSHOP 3: MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

Relevant points from workshop

- Show the effects of alcohol in later life, e.g.
 - liver
 - alcoholism
 - short-term effects too
- Be realistic with messages:
 - 'It could be you!'
 - 'Everybody isn't getting drunk'
 - responsibility to look after yourself

- drinking is not always fun
- making a fool of yourself
- not able to get home
- Peer pressure:
 - if someone else is not drinking, it is easier not to drink
 - depends on group – might be left out if not drinking
- Embarrassment if you're with someone who is drunk
- Sometime parents blame young people even if they're sober
- Bebo – Red FM – reality
- Stories about crashes – talk about the ads
- Billboards as follow-up to TV
- Should do road safety-type ads for alcohol
- Shock ads are better
- Video on phones – send in to TV programmes
- Difference between drinking and binge drinking
- Should have alcohol with food
- Some parents don't care
- Parents need to see what their children are doing
- Blame other young people
- Older younger people should not buy drink for underage ones – emphasis on illegality
- If you buy the drink – keep the change
- Young people should know who to ask and where to go about information on alcohol
- Can buy cans in supermarkets at automated check-out
- Get drink from houses
- Get drink from older siblings
- Get drink at parties
- Shock tactics:
 - stomach pumped
 - alcohol poisoning
 - showing a young people dying, the people left behind
 - being raped
 - how vulnerable you are
 - no control
 - find it hard to say 'No'
 - choking on vomit
 - having no money
- Use sports people to give the message
- Don't drink with sport
- Money is an issue – especially if living at home

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Need ads for young people and ads for parents, including shock messages.
2. Promote responsible drinking.
3. Need to focus on young people, as well as older people.

WORKSHOP 4: THE LAW I

Relevant points from workshop

- In foreign countries where the legal age is lower, there is much less abuse of alcohol
- It might work elsewhere because there is a different culture and attitude to alcohol
- Law is not enforced in Ireland. At the moment, young people who are drinking just get a caution - nothing beyond that
- Some pubs knowingly supply alcohol to young people
- Suppliers should be punished, rather than the young people, by, for example, heavy fines for pubs/off-licenses, close down pubs, etc.
- Garda ID could cut down on this problem
- Offer incentives to publicans, e.g. tax supplements
- The legal age of 18 is there for a reason, e.g. medical reasons.
 - if the age was lower, takes the hype away from drinking and teaches young people to drink responsibly
 - culture needs to change before any change to legal age
 - because it is illegal, makes it more interesting
 - parental responsibility
 - fake ID is easy to get
 - doesn't need to be fake ID - use sister's or brother's passport/ID and it is accepted
 - improve quality of official ID and make it more difficult to copy
 - the law on older people buying alcohol for young people is not enforced
 - if you are caught using someone else's ID, bouncers take ID and give it to Gardaí. Owner of ID has to collect it
- Gardaí and bouncers:
 - need to take the issue seriously, but they don't want the hassle
 - sometimes Gardaí take the worst cases home to parents, but won't charge you
 - shame and embarrassment might be better than Gardaí intervention
 - spending a night in a cell might be seen as cool
 - Gardaí don't punish young people at big events
 - price increases for alcohol might work
 - in Cork, Gardaí warned pubs and other venues to stop serving young people. Some publicans were taken to court and some places closed down
 - ID signs everywhere - drives young people onto the streets
 - some young people don't like drinking on the streets
- Better to drink in pubs - drink less because it's more expensive and you're there to dance and socialise
- On streets - emphasis is on getting drunk, not safe
- Age card to go into pub and not to drink
- 'Safe limit' card, where you can have a glass of beer, some small token privilege
- Some parents offer to pay for car insurance if young person does not drink until they are 18

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Only one single form of ID should be accepted - if you don't have it, you don't get in.
2. Allow 16-17 year-olds into pubs without drinking - barred if caught drinking.
3. Better enforcement of the law by Gardaí. Young people who are caught should be brought home to their parents.

WORKSHOP 5: THE LAW II

Relevant points from workshop

- Strict enforcement of ID
- More often asked for ID these days
- Very easy to get fake ID
- Very easy to use someone else's ID
- Pubs are not strict
- Clubs sometimes take ID from young people. Could lead to fraud problems
- Sometimes ID doesn't matter, appearance matters
- Easier for girls – make-up
- Sometimes bouncers accept fake ID regardless
- If you use someone else's ID and the bouncers confiscate it and send it to the Gardaí, the person who owns the ID just gets a warning. If there was proper punishment for this (e.g. a fine), you would be less likely to give it away again
- There should be one accepted Garda ID age card, which is difficult to copy
- If smoking section at back of club, people who get in may come out and give their IDs to their friends
- Give young people other things to do
- Law is not enforced when older people buy alcohol for young people
- Some Gardaí go undercover
- Gardaí response – take people's drinks and pour them away
- Bring the young person home to their parents – good solution, but depends on the parents
- Fines are effective to stop young people drinking, but not when parents have to pay for them
- Fines for drinking on the streets should be €150
- Making pubs more accessible to 16-17 year-olds:
 - less likely to binge drink
 - safer than being on the streets
 - if you have ID, you get a wristband that allows you to buy alcohol. Those with no wristband can't buy alcohol
 - difficult to enforce
 - parents can teach responsible drinking
 - being in pubs allows you to see what goes on
- Garda raids – if there was a greater presence of Gardaí in pubs, bouncers would be more strict about ID checks
- Incentives:
 - if young people don't drink, they get a car. It works!
 - fear parents more than Gardaí
 - if Gardaí took young people home to their parents, young people would be less inclined to drink, or get drunk, again
 - depends on parents, punishment-grounded, disappointment
 - parents can't really be held responsible
 - important to follow through with punishment
 - don't allow young people to stay in their friend's house
 - some parents allow children to drink because they can control it and the children drink in a safer environment
 - make young people more responsible

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 'Safe limit' age card for young people, age 16+:
 - allowed into a venue for 16-18 year-olds;
 - 2-3 alcoholic drinks allowed;
 - anyone who abuses this should be barred.
2. More tamper-proof Garda ID:
 - stricter enforcement of ID checks;
 - stricter penalty/punishment for young people caught drinking, e.g. overnight in prison
 - community service, e.g. clean up litter
3. Gardaí need to take the issue more seriously.

WORKSHOP 6: EDUCATION I

Relevant points from workshop

- SPHE:
 - not much emphasis on alcohol education. Drinking is seen as socially acceptable
 - invite speakers from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
 - talks don't scare young people
 - real-life scenarios – maybe using younger people
- Young people don't think that alcohol has that many implications – all you get is a hangover
- Videos – to show what it does to your body
- Should start programmes in 5th/6th class
- Scare tactics – to show how to drink more responsibly
- Need to learn responsibility
- Teenagers drink to get drunk or to get a name
- If parents are too strict, young people can go really wild
- Teenagers can't just go out and have a laugh
- Nowhere to go for young people – especially if you want to celebrate
- Programmes for schools, parents and students – involve whole family
- Should use examples of young people closer in age to them, e.g. 21
- Particular image of alcohol – a lot of hidden alcoholism
- Boys and girls drink different drinks - girls like spirits, boys like beer
- Should be confidence-building in schools
- More likely to turn to a friend
- More holistic programmes
- Buddy system in schools, e.g. Anam Cara (North Presentation, Cork), 4th/5th year buddy, 3 or 4 young people, only works if school invests in it and recognises value
- Better school campaigns, to include a section on alcohol (North Presentation, Cork) with students coming up with school slogans
- Need to invest more in Transition Year – schools need to put exciting programmes in place
- Increase legal age for drinking:
 - in USA, legal age is 21 – people are less likely to start drinking earlier
 - in Ireland, increasing the legal age won't work, too much of a change, won't be accepted
- Decrease legal age for drinking:
 - drive to starting even younger
 - people might drink more responsibly
 - less binge drinking

- less trouble on the State
- at the moment, there is a lot of trouble on the streets caused by young people drunk
- take away the novelty
- not good for health
- not mature enough
- keep legal age limit at 18

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Need to have education programmes that promote responsibility, involve parents and start in 5th/6th class.
2. Education programmes on alcohol should be more holistic and should incorporate mental health, personal development and youth culture.
3. Promote idea of 'better school' campaign, e.g. all young people are responsible for slogans and being proactive.

WORKSHOP 7: EDUCATION II

Relevant points from workshop

- Substance misuse programme in Transition Year
- Videos as part of SPHE are totally dated and from other countries
- Videos should specify age of young people
- Should have more shock tactics
- Sometimes show extreme examples
- Should show real-life experiences
- Maybe as YSI programme
- Talks in school on real-life situations, e.g. drive for life programme
- Guidance counsellors in schools – need to be more accessible and private
- Should be training for all teachers
- Attitude that school is for education – close their eyes, don't see as their problem since usually happens outside of home
- Link of celebrating exam results with drinking
- Involve young people in organising events
- Mentor/buddy system
- Gives support
- Sense of protection
- Student councils
- Promote drinking responsibly
- Learn how to deal with peer pressure
- Needs to be more than just talks to be practical
- Need to eliminate 'coolness' factor
- Need to change attitudes
- Drinking culture is different to rest of Europe
- Drinking to get drunk – binge drinking
- Need to educate adults as well. Adults need to be more responsible in their attitudes
- Drinks are marketed to look more attractive to girls – colour, taste
- Sports stars as role models
- Need to get rid of drinks companies as sponsors of sports
- Rugby schools have contracts not to drink. So if you're going to be part of a school team, you should sign up to a contract and keep it
- Link alcohol education to sports played in schools

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools need to be more proactive – there needs to be a ‘whole’ school approach and use innovative, creative resources.
2. School policy to put contract in place not to drink if involved in a school team. That team then acts as peer support or role models.
3. Have clear information about measures of alcohol, its effects and the different effects on boys and girls.

WORKSHOP 8: PARENTS

Relevant points from workshop

- Parents should teach their children right from wrong:
 - how to drink sensibly
 - some parents don't drink
- Teenagers are going to try drinking anyway
- Parents need to face up and make a choice about drinking
- Teach self-respect, so don't go out getting drunk
- Tell about consequence – parents know, but their children don't
- Some parents do know, but don't do anything about it
- 1st year:
 - realise that parents aren't right about everything
 - everything is getting younger – iPods, mobiles – throwing away childhood to grow up faster
- Almost punished for *not* drinking because you have to look after others
- Trust
- Parents understand that you build up to drinking
- No buzz if parents introduce you to drink
- Parents would show you more responsible drinking
- Drink in club-type venue under adult supervision
- Drink small amounts
- Messages for parents:
 - know who your children are meeting with and know where they are going
 - teach them the abuses and misuses of alcohol
 - inform your children of the responsibilities of drinking
 - be more understanding of young people drinking
 - set reasonable boundaries for drinking (e.g. what to drink and how much, drinking on special occasions)

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents should teach their children about alcohol, e.g. give them a glass of wine at home.
2. Be understanding on special occasions and set reasonable boundaries.
3. Parents should know:
 - where their children are;
 - what they are doing;
 - who they are with;
 - parents are in denial or are naïve.

CONSULTATION 4 - DUBLIN

Location: Dublin

Venue: Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1

Date: 18 October 2007

Issues identified by participants for discussion in workshops

- Peer pressure and youth culture
- Facilities (2 workshops)
- Legal age
- Education (2 workshops)
- Media and advertising
- The Law

WORKSHOP 1: PEER PRESSURE AND YOUTH CULTURE

Relevant points from workshop

- Peer pressure is main reason why young people drink
- Drinkers are intimidated by non-drinkers
- Non-drinkers end up as the minders
- Young people can be positively influenced by older siblings
- Drinking is part of youth culture – there is nothing else to do
- Going to the cinema or for a meal is not seen as cool and is more expensive
- Certain labels/identities associated with certain kinds of drink
- Girls and boys drink for different reasons:
 - boys - sport and celebrations
 - girls - to prove they are as good as the lads
- Not all young people drink – it's not part of all youth culture
- Challenge the image that alcohol is immature because adults drink too
- More self-confidence is needed:
 - counselling in schools
 - opportunities for young people to reflect on why they drink
- Young people have to fend for themselves, nothing for them to do – facilities can help some people only
- Lower age for clubs so young people are welcomed

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Building self-confidence is necessary, e.g. mentoring in schools and peer education.
2. Shock tactics in education and advertising is necessary to counter the culture that drinking is cool.
3. Opportunities for dialogue between young people on experiences of alcohol outside school, e.g. consultations.

WORKSHOP 2: FACILITIES I

Relevant points from workshop

- Opportunities to try something new
- Battle of the Bands works well. There is actually peer pressure not to drink, so that it works
- Discos and gigs:
 - not supervised by parents

- people who drink/sneak drink in should be removed
- people drink for confidence
- need bouncers at night
- Need a place to hang out where you don't have to buy anything
- Youth cafés need:
 - pool tables
 - longer opening hours
 - transport
 - more supervision
 - trouble-makers ruin it
 - x box
 - Sky TV
 - to be organised by young people
 - staffed by adults who understand young people
- Break-away camps with photography, sport, dance, swimming, hiking
- Rural areas need transport and cheaper bus services/community buses
- Attitudes of adults need to change, e.g.
 - restaurants think that groups of young people are trouble

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More youth cafés.
2. Adults should not be prejudiced against teenagers or judgmental of them.
3. Make alcohol harder to get and more expensive.

WORKSHOP 3: FACILITIES II

Relevant points from workshop

- Types of facilities that young people like if they were free:
 - youth clubs and sports clubs
 - youth cafés should have:
 - » longer opening hours
 - » age groups split up
 - » movie nights
 - » place to have a chat, hang out
 - » free from intimidating gangs
 - » an organising youth committee
 - » adults that understand young people
 - » set price per month or membership
 - dance classes
 - loads of things in one centre
 - discos for Halloween/Christmas, with transport available, e.g. shuttle bus
- More sports:
 - girls' teams
 - skateboarding
 - alternatives to Gaelic and soccer
- Need places to just hang out that are safe:
 - Gardaí move people on for no reason
 - judged on where you live or where you are from
 - teenagers are labelled as trouble-makers

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More clubs and youth cafés.
2. More respect for teenagers from Gardaí and society, no matter where they come from or what clothes they wear.
3. More sports facilities.

WORKSHOP 4: LEGAL AGE

Relevant points from workshop

- Legal age is 21 in USA, but they have far more problems than Ireland
- Split legal age between spirits and beer
- Lower age to 16:
 - need proper ID
 - 16 in pubs and 18 in off-licences
- Cultural issue as well as legal issue
- Have own ID card, which includes personalised body mass index (BMI)
 - BMI would dictate how many drinks you could have
- At 17, it's legal to have sex and to drive, but not to drink
- Should be one age where you can do everything, e.g. drive, drink, have sex
- Offer cheaper and alternative places to go with no alcohol
- Gigs are always for over-18s, which discriminates against young people:
 - should have special licence and young people get marked with a stamp so they cannot be served
 - should be separate areas in festivals for under-18s
- IDs should be checked in bars
- Music concerts should have separate areas for serving alcohol
- Over-16s should be allowed in bars after 9pm

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Legal age of 16 to drink beer in pubs (no drinks over 5% proof).
2. Legal age of 18 to buy in off-licences.
3. Under-18s should be allowed into concerts, with alcohol served in a separate area or have a proper ID system in place.

WORKSHOP 5: EDUCATION I

Relevant points from workshop

- National Drink Awareness week:
 - posters
 - competitions
 - table quizzes
 - celebrity presence/guest speakers
 - having fun, but learning
 - 6th year students give talk to 1st year group
 - science class to focus on effects of alcohol
 - case studies and real-life stories
 - seminars for different age levels
 - no adults – talk in confidence

- Drink Awareness Council in each school:
 - provide surveys
 - get in speakers
 - feedback to Government
- 'Big Brother/Big Sister' mentoring programme:
 - balanced view
 - show you can have a good time without drink
 - need to have a connection with the person being mentored
- Educate through the media:
 - get students to make home videos
 - use pictures from Junior Cert night to shock others
 - once-off doesn't work – continuous use
 - advertise graphic ads late at night
 - show extremes – shock tactics
 - similar to the smoking ads, which are effective
- Gardaí turn a blind eye to underage drinking
- Start education in 1st year or even 4th class in primary school, e.g.
 - Doctor talking about alcohol abuse
- There is more focus on drugs education – drinking is more socially acceptable
- More punishment for those who are drunk in public
- Show all the sides of alcohol abuse – family and community are affected too
- Teach about sensible/responsible drinking rather than stop drinking
- Education programme for parents:
 - parents and children programme
 - for parents to know the signs
- Find a way to get rid of the curiosity young people have about alcohol without tasting it or try it out in a controlled environment
- Note in school journal on alcohol abuse
- Speakers and videos are useful
- It's too late to start in secondary school
- Change the law about advertising - subliminal messages through sport are getting through all the time

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hold a Drink Awareness Week with age-appropriate education and messages.
2. Have peer-mentoring programmes, with voluntary mentors.
3. Better education through the media, with video campaigns and shock tactics.

WORKSHOP 6: EDUCATION II

Relevant points from workshop

- Education should be from younger people and teachers
- Bring in speakers in their 20s with experience of alcohol
- If you are told you can't drink, you are more inclined to want to
- Dedicated class on alcohol and drugs:
 - effects on mental health
 - counsellors
 - videos are not always useful

- Repetition is not good because it kills the impact
- People drink to feel more confident – education can only have limited effect
- Alcohol should be part of CSPE – one school talk has no effect
- Need to educate people before secondary school level – pictures and scare tactics should be used in primary schools
- If your parents are very strict, you are more likely to drink
- Parents have a role in educating their children about alcohol
- People have no awareness about what is a 'limit' or what is 'safe' – you have to learn this for yourself
- 6th year/1st year mentoring programme
- Different programme for different years:
 - 1st year: don't treat them as babies, have guest speakers and 6th-year mentors, use pictures and scare tactics
 - 2nd/3rd years: this is the point when people start to drink, so they need to know of dangers and consequences, effects, medical side-effects
 - 5th/6th years: subtle messages, beware of drugs
 - Transition Year is important because people have more free time

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Peer mentoring - 5th/6th-year students to mentor 1st-year students. Need buy-in from older students for this to work.
2. Fortnightly classes on alcohol and drugs, with age-appropriate messages.
3. Primary school education on alcohol, including a session for parents.

WORKSHOP 7: MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

Relevant points from workshop

- Products are made more palatable for young people, e.g. bitter taste is hidden
- Vodka is sold as a set with coke to make it sweet
- Merchandising is strong, e.g. novelty Jack Daniels glasses
- Drinking is socially acceptable
- Quantity of alcohol you drink is a 'badge of honour'
- Ban all advertising of alcohol, in the same way as drugs and smoking are banned
- In France, ads are banned, but there is still an alcohol problem
- More ads for people who already drink
- Promotion of cheap alcohol influences people
- Alcohol is glamorised in ads
- Warnings are too small

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Films on TV, made by young people, featuring case studies of effects of alcohol on whole family.
2. Ban advertising of drinks popular with young people, e.g. alco-pops, West Coast cooler.
3. Visual warnings in off-licences and shops, and on bottles and cans.

WORKSHOP 8: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Relevant points from workshop

- Not strict enough
- Gardaí are very lenient:
 - warnings are always given
 - never brought to the Garda station
 - parents are not told
 - people are not afraid of the law
- People should be named and shamed
- Gardaí should follow-up on where young people get drink and stop it at source
- 9pm curfew is not enforced very often
- Young people in pubs should be supervised by older young people
- More fun things to do are needed
- If people drank at home with their parents, there would be no thrill in drinking. Parents should let their kids drink in moderation
- Single out pubs/off-licences that are supplying drink to young people
- Underage drinking is extreme, so the punishment needs to be extreme
- Spirits should have a higher drinking legal age than beer
- Fake IDs are very realistic
- Places that sell alcohol should have access to a controlled database

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Two-tiered ID system, depending on % of alcohol.
2. Compulsory breathalysing for people driving out of pub/club car parks.
3. Updated ID system with passport/credit card size swipe card, which has a photograph and is connected to a central database.

CONSULTATION 5 - DUBLIN

Location: Dublin

Venue: Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1

Date: 19 October 2007

Issues identified by participants for discussion in workshops

- Legal age
- Law enforcement
- Education (2 workshops)
- General issues
- Lack of facilities
- Youth culture and peer pressure (2 workshops)

WORKSHOP 1: LEGAL AGE

Relevant points from workshop

- Negatives of increasing legal age:
 - barmen can't tell the difference in 18-21 year-olds
 - barmen don't care
 - not fair to people who are nearly 18 now
 - 20-year-olds would just be drinking in the fields
 - body can actually process drink at an earlier age
 - people stop binge drinking at 18 since the taboo is gone
 - 18-20 year-olds will not be happy
 - starting age will not change
 - homeless people will buy alcohol for young people
- Negatives of lowering the legal age:
 - younger people will try and break the rules
 - gives young people false confidence
 - a way to rebel
 - people will start to drink younger
 - being young will be all about being drunk
 - the problem could get worse
 - drinking at 14 can cause physical and mental problems
- Positives of lowering the legal age:
 - young people are at least supervised in pubs - this would reduce problems, e.g. fighting when drunk
 - people won't drink in the fields
 - not a problem in Europe - part of their culture
 - thrill gone if you reduce legal age to 16
 - drink will be about socialising rather than binge drinking
 - it might be worse for a while, but would then even out
 - when you have to get someone else to buy alcohol for you, you get and drink as much as possible because it might be a while before you can get it again, whereas when you can buy it yourself, you only drink what you want
 - groups of people look after each other and try to keep each other from going over the limit
- Role of parents/family:
 - parents buy kids drink and allow them set amounts - it is better
 - parents must trust young people, even if their older siblings have had a bad experience

- people are not afraid of getting caught by the Gardaí (when they show up)
- when older siblings start to drink, you are curious about it
- when you have your first drink with your parents, you feel safer and are not as curious about it
- Under-18s get served all the time and don't get asked for ID

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Keep the legal age for drinking as it is.
2. Lower the legal age to 16 - 16-18 year-olds can only drink anything under 15% proof.
3. Lower the age for everything! Introduce alcohol at a younger age and have an open family discussion.

WORKSHOP 2: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Relevant points from workshop

- Fake IDs:
 - fake IDs are very easy to work/make
 - no repercussions for having a fake ID – there should be
 - only accept legal/Garda ID
- Pubs/off-licences:
 - take away licences from, or give record to, pubs and off-licences that sell drink to young people
 - heavier penalties for people who serve young people – shut down for a month or made close at 11.30pm every night
- Gardaí:
 - Gardaí must be more strict and do their job
 - there is no respect for the Gardaí because they don't respect you
 - Gardaí bend rules for themselves
 - more undercover Gardaí outside off-licences
 - more undercover Gardaí outside every pub
- Punishment:
 - parents should be contacted when you are caught drinking
 - JLO *every time* you are caught drinking
 - need to have more repercussions
 - do community work when caught drinking
 - no punishment if you seek help
- When people buy loads of drink, get their address so they can be traced
- Need a centre to help people with drinking problems

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Gardaí to take JLO and punishments more seriously.
2. Volunteer watch outside off-licences and bars to see if young people are being served.
3. Only Garda IDs should be accepted.

WORKSHOP 3: EDUCATION I

Relevant points from workshop

- Lack of confidence is the main issue - family troubles and constant bullying can dent people's confidence and self-esteem
- Need course run by professionals, not teachers, to increase confidence and self-esteem
- 'Big Brother/Big Sister' mentoring programmes should be introduced in schools
- Bring people (e.g. athletes, sport icons, people with experience, people who are funny, paramedics) into schools for talks on alcohol
- 1st and 2nd years should be targeted since it's too late when in 3rd year
- People go through a phase from 1st to 3rd year, but calm down then
- Ask young people why they drink or feel under pressure to drink
- Look at alcohol in religion and SPHE:
 - videos on the damage drink does
 - talks in schools to make parents aware
- Start 'scare tactics' in 3rd class in primary schools, e.g. posters or pictures with effects

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students being educated about alcohol by older teenagers.
2. Hold self-confidence courses run by experts, teenagers and professionals, rather than teachers.
3. DVDs on the effects of alcohol:
 - brain, kidney, liver damage
 - how to deal with people who are drunk
 - safe use of alcohol
 - real-life stories

WORKSHOP 4: EDUCATION II

Relevant points from workshop

- Little or no information on alcohol in schools
- Education needs to start earlier
- Professional people with experience should deliver the talks – the Gardaí would be too intimidating in primary schools
- Emphasis needs to be taken off prohibiting drink, with the focus put on a mature attitude to drinking
- Education needs to take place over a period of time and not be all crammed into a few hours
- Promote people who drink responsibly, as well as those who don't drink at all
- Role models should be from local communities or similar backgrounds
- Youth cafés work well since they lure people away from drink
- It's not just the role of schools, but also sport clubs and parents that need to educate young people on alcohol
- School counsellors should be people you are comfortable with and separate to teachers giving regular classes
- Give young people choice and responsibility over their own lives – need for trust
- Mentoring programmes work well – older people in 6th year can train and mentor 1st years. Mentor groups need to be small and voluntary

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Have a dedicated student counsellor in schools for personal issues and problems.
2. Put progressive age-appropriate education programmes in place. All programmes should focus on choice, responsibility and trust.
3. Real-life stories – positive role models, but balanced view.

WORKSHOP 5: GENERAL ISSUES

Relevant points from workshop

- Ads:
 - Ads aimed at teenagers – like car accident ads – should be shown with shock images, such as stomach pumping and friends dying and a voiceover to the effect, 'You're not so cool now'
- Role of parents:
 - parents need to trust their teenagers, but also need to know where they are and that they are safe
 - some parents are in denial
 - some parents worry too much, especially about girls
 - need to allow their young people to drink in moderation
- Knowing your limits:
 - seeing other people really drunk and your own experience teaches you your limits
 - people know their limits, but don't care and drink to get drunk
- Drinking age should be lowered to 16 because the fun or 'buzz' would be taken out of it
- Education only comes from older teachers, people with experience
- Peer pressure is not what it is perceived – people actually don't mind if friends don't drink, but they end up being the 'mammy' or 'caretaker'
- Negative stereotyping, like 'All young people drink' – but actually many don't. Gardaí also stereotype young people
- Facilities:
 - only place to go are friends' houses with DVDs
 - youth clubs need to be youth-based and have better opening hours
 - if parents or youth clubs allowed young people to drink, it could be monitored
- Cultural issue:
 - it's an Irish issue
 - French culture seems better
 - no ads for drink should be allowed at sports events

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Realistic ads with shock value.
2. Facilities for 16-18 year-olds, where they don't go to get drunk.
3. Parents need to meet young people half-way.

WORKSHOP 6: LACK OF FACILITIES

Relevant points from workshop

- Types of facilities that young people like:
 - swimming pools and leisure centres
 - youth cafés
 - Leisureplex with pool, bowling, arcade games
- What should be available in facilities:
 - music
 - sport
 - fashion shows
 - fun
 - discos
 - computers
- Have young people of similar age in facilities at one time:
 - 10-12 year-olds like bowling, sports, trips away
- Prices are sometimes not suitable for young people, e.g. €8 for cinema
- Some facilities get boring after a while
- Need good advertising of existing facilities
- Facilities need to be open at weekends and late at night
- Youth cafés need to be free
- Hanging out:
 - there are no places just to hang out
 - people are paranoid and call the Gardaí to move people along
 - young people are singled out and categorised even if they are doing nothing wrong
- People resort to drink when they have nowhere to hang out
- Drinking outside (e.g. under bridges or in alleyways) is more dangerous than inside
- Facilities need to be fun to show that you can have fun without drink
- More alcohol-free youth discos
- Need different discos in different areas so there won't be fights because of where people are from
- People should develop a hobby/favourite sport and have practice late in the evenings so they are less likely to go and drink
- Sports achievements (e.g. soccer wins) are celebrated by going drinking
- Young people need to be encouraged to do extra-curricular activities

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Discos.
2. Cheaper activities, e.g. cinema.
3. More after-school supports and activities that people are interested in.

WORKSHOP 7: YOUTH CULTURE AND PEER PRESSURE I

Relevant points from workshop

- More facilities are needed
- More information on the damage drink can cause
- Peer pressure:
 - is main cause for young people drinking
 - is an excuse – it's your own choice

- if you have a friend that doesn't drink, you don't feel so left out
- it's possible to still go out and not drink
- would be irrelevant if you couldn't get drink in the first place, but it's hard to regulate that
- If you tell people they can't drink, they will
- People who start drinking early (e.g. in France) have a maturity about drink
- Needs to be more punishment for people who buy drink for younger people
- People might be angry at the Government, but will realise they were right when they mature
- Education/information/courses:
 - need courses about how to say 'No' and be your own person:
 - » in schools or in a different environment
 - » by professionals, other than teachers
 - need education/information on alcohol effects at an earlier age – 1st year or even younger. These courses should be simple and creative, and delivered by someone other than a teacher who is friendly and experienced
 - teachers are not effective at teaching this message
 - lots of people won't take these classes seriously
- Drink gives you a great buzz
- Don't like not feeling in control
- Parents need to be educated on alcohol:
 - if parents let you have one or two drinks, young people will be more sensible
 - parents are not aware and don't accept that their teenagers drink at all (in denial)

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Need to have more positive attitude toward young people – media need more positive images.
2. Should have more choice of affordable places for young people to go.
3. Have more positive image of people who don't drink.

WORKSHOP 8: YOUTH CULTURE AND PEER PRESSURE II

Relevant points from workshop

- It is perceived that drinking will make you more fun and more confident
- People feel you have to try it
- There is so much stress in school that at the weekends you want to do something more fun – doesn't have to be drinking, but sometimes that is the only option
- Youth cafés need to have fun activities to keep people interested
- Compulsory IDs are needed from the age of 12
- Lowering the legal age will take the novelty away from drinking – it's cool to drink because you're not allowed
- At first, there would be a rush to drink and then the novelty would be over
- It's a question of maturity rather than age
- If somebody else is buying alcohol for you, you get loads, whereas you only buy what you need if you are buying it yourself
- Legal age should be lower in pubs than in off-licences
- Family-orientated café-bars may not work because you don't want to drink with your parents
- Most people who drink when underage are caught, but nothing is done
- Parents know what is happening, but can do nothing about it

- There should be a two-tiered drinking age - 16-17 for beer and alco-pops, and 18 for spirits
- Younger people feel the need to make excuses about why they don't drink
- Not fair that you are treated as an adult on a bus at 16 years of age, but not in a pub
- Public have an image that if you are just sitting there, you must be doing something wrong
- If one person does something wrong, everyone is labelled the same

TOP 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Youth courses on building self-confidence:
 - within SPHE programme;
 - professionals, other than teachers, to deliver courses
 - professionals with experience and who respect young people
2. Adult courses on drink awareness.
3. Stricter enforcement of law on over-18s buying drink for teenagers.

Appendix 2: 'Sticky dot' Voting Outcomes

The following table illustrates all of the 'sticky dot' voting outcomes in the 5 locations where consultations took place. Note that certain suggestions (*set in italic*) got no 'sticky dot' votes at all.

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
LAW ENFORCEMENT/THE LAW						
ID						49
• Enforced ID checking in pubs/clubs		1				1
• One single, tamper-proof Garda age card accepted as ID		1	11		5	17
• Updated ID system where a photo comes up on a central database				22		22
• Age cards should be compulsory, from 12-25 years	7	2				9
Penalties						12
• Stricter penalties for adults buying alcohol for young people		5				5
• Tougher penalties for underage drinkers, e.g. fine, community service		7				7
Role of Gardaí						28
• More Gardaí to enforce the law		0				0
• Gardaí to take punishment more seriously and underage drinkers get JLO					5	5
• Gardaí and adults should show more respect to teenagers				13		13
• Greater enforcement where Gardaí bring underage drinkers home to their parents			10			10
Other						18
• Compulsory breathalysing on coming out of bar/club car park				14		14
• Make alcohol harder to get and more expensive				0		0
• Pubs/off-licences/public/Gardaí to be aware of responsibilities		0				0
• Volunteers outside off-licences to stop adults buying alcohol for under-18s					4	4
LEGAL AGE						
Maintain current legal age limit						28
• Current legislation should be enforced	9					9

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
• Have to be 18 to buy drink in off-licences				2		2
• Keep the legal age at 18					17	17
Lower the legal age to 16						188
• System in place to allow 16-year-olds to drink alcohol in a pub/club in moderation using 'safe limit' card		28	39			67
• 16-year-olds should be allowed to stay in pubs after 9pm curfew		20				20
• Two-tiered ID system to allow 16-18 year-olds to drink alcohol not more than 5% volume in pubs/supervised venues		8		36	45	89
• Lower legal age to drink alcohol with no restrictions to 16					12	12
Other						4
• Increase the price of cheap beers		4				4
EDUCATION						
Programmes						48
• Age-appropriate education programme for every school year	20					20
• Involve young people in planning these programmes	11					11
• Education about safe drinking and consequences		3				3
• Education programmes to promote responsible drinking for 5th and 6th class students, with parents' involvement			7			7
• Education programmes should include mental health, personal development and youth culture			4			4
• Age-appropriate education programme with a focus on choice, responsibility and trust					3	3
Peer-mentoring programmes						28
• Talks about alcohol from teenagers for 5th and 6th class (primary)		10				10
• Peer-mentoring programmes, where older teenagers educate younger ones				8	10	18
Style of programmes						8
• DVDs for primary and second-level schools on alcohol effects, improved talks and teaching of SPHE and CSPE		3				3

Education (continued)

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
• Fortnightly dedicated class on alcohol and drugs				2		2
• One-off class for primary school students				1		1
• Real-life stories on positive role models					0	0
• DVD on effects of alcohol					2	2
Role of schools						14
• Better school campaigns that include young people in planning			0			0
• Schools more proactive			1			1
• School policy to make contract around not drinking			4			4
• Have clear information for alcohol (e.g. limits, measures)			6			6
• Drink Awareness Week in schools				3		3
General						9
• Better education in media				1		1
• Adult courses on more awareness of teenage drinking					0	0
• Opportunities outside school for young people to discuss their experiences of alcohol				3		3
• Access to counselling/ dedicated student counsellor for young people				2	3	5
FACILITIES						
Need for alternative activities						102
• Offer alternative alcohol-free facilities with a wide range of activities, run by youth organisations, to include skateboarding, rugby, dancing, girls' teams, swimming, horse-riding, basketball, etc.	25		2	9	3	39
• More youth cafés that are youth-led and youth-friendly, with better opening hours and counselling available		17	8	33		58
• Facilities need to be open on weekend nights until 11pm or 12am			5			5
General						16
• Improved transport to discos and clubs		3				3
• Better advertising of existing facilities		0				0
• Sports and important matches to be held first thing on Saturdays and Sundays			3			3

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of teenagers (widely representative) to review youth cafés and recommend how they should be run 			1			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports clubs to encourage those who are average, as well as those who are good 			2			2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under-18s should be allowed into concerts and alcohol should be served in separate areas 				7		7
YOUTH CULTURE AND PEER PRESSURE						31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural change is necessary 	19					19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for change in social attitude to drink, zero tolerance 		12				12
CONFIDENCE AND PEER PRESSURE						12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth courses on self-confidence 					12	12
MEDIA AND ADVERTISING						
Advertisements						35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need ads for young people and ads for parents 			1			1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use shock and realistic messages in advertising campaigns 			10		6	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible drinking campaigns need to focus on young people as well as older people 			3			3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short advertisements and films made by young people on real-life experiences 				10		10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ban ads of drinks popular with young people 				1		1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual warning on cans/bottles about effects of alcohol 				2		2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ban alcohol ads 					2	2
Role of media						36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media need to stop negatively stereotyping young people and give message about responsible drinking 	27				4	31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media should play a role in understanding attitudes 		5				5
ROLE OF PARENTS						61
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory parents' education programmes and more parent responsibility 	27					27

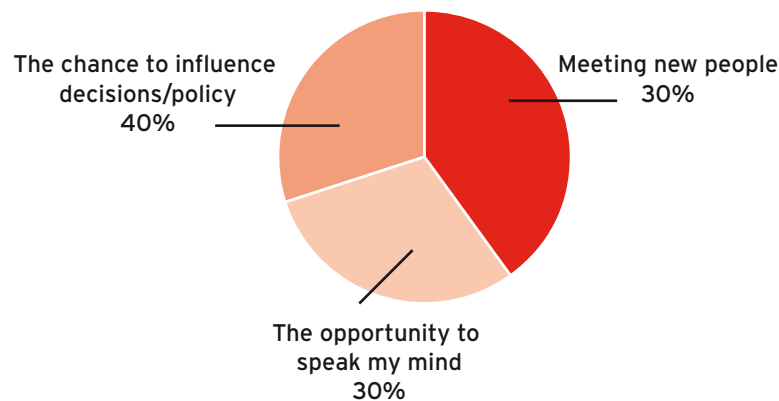
Role of parents *(continued)*

	Athlone	Sligo	Cork	Dublin 1	Dublin 2	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents: Be aware of tricks/ consequences, set good example for young people, be open-minded, have understanding 		3				3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents should teach their children about alcohol (limits, amounts, etc) and show by example 			0			0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents need to take responsibility, e.g. know where their children are and who they are with 			6			6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents should be understanding about special occasions and set reasonable boundaries 			12			12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents should meet children half-way on trust issues 					13	13
GENERAL ISSUES						18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower cost of car insurance as incentive for those who don't drink 		18				18

Appendix 3: Evaluation

A brief written evaluation sheet was given to all participants at the end of each consultation. The purpose of the evaluation was to secure information on the type of experience that young people had during the consultations and to ensure improvements could be made for subsequent consultations. From a total of 257 participants, 254 evaluation sheets were completed. Many chose multiple boxes where a number of options were available. The following is a brief analysis of the completed evaluation sheets.

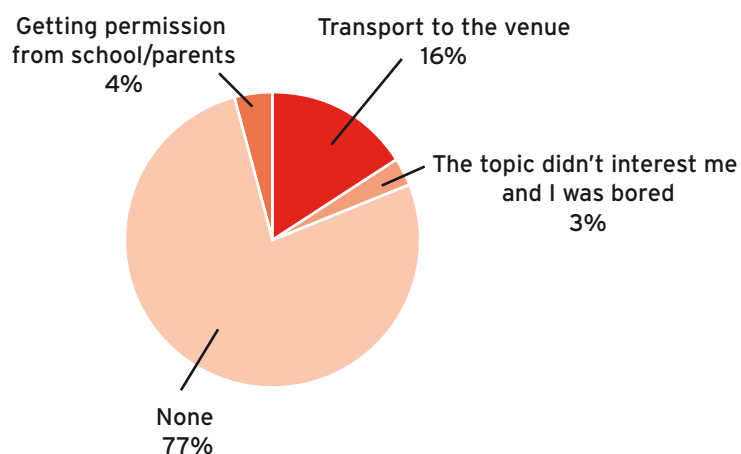
1. What did you enjoy most about today?



Participants gave equal weight (30%) to the opportunities of meeting new people and of speaking their mind. The chance to influence decisions and policy was seen as the most enjoyable element of the day (40%). Participants also had an opportunity to indicate 'other' reasons for enjoying the day and these included:

- listening to other people;
- wearing the school uniform;
- being able to show their findings from previous meetings;
- listening to other people's opinions and seeing how they differ from their own;
- debating and changing others' views and their own;
- food;
- hearing other teenagers' views from different areas and counties.

2. Were there any difficulties in you taking part today?

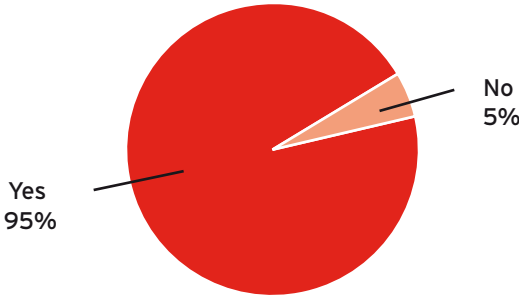


The vast majority of participants (77%) had no difficulty with the consultations. A number of participants, however, had time delays on transport to the venue or other such mishaps, although all venues were deliberately chosen because of their central location and proximity to public transport hubs. A small fraction of participants had some issue getting permission forms signed by parents or teachers, and a smaller fraction were not interested in the topic on the day.

The following comments were some of the 'other' difficulties cited by participants:

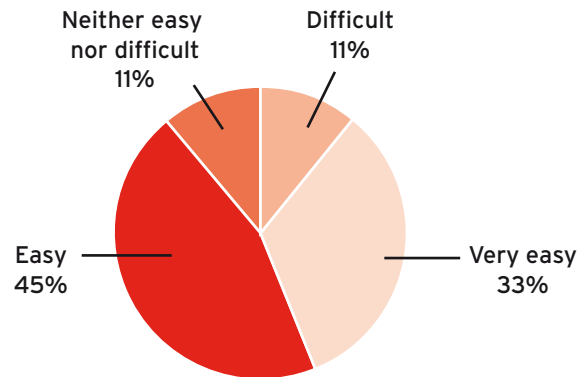
- Consultation was not well advertised.
- Being on crutches limited my movement.
- People interrupted when I spoke.
- Getting forms sorted between schools and groups.
- I was forced by my school principal to wear my uniform.
- Getting up early.
- Getting forms sorted.
- Shy at first, but then I was OK.
- Some people's ignorance of the problem and their lack of an open mind.
- My form didn't arrive - sorry, I gate-crashed!
- Real lack of understanding of issues among audience.
- People interrupt too much.
- Was alone at the start because there was no room for my fellow-school representatives.
- We live in Limerick and the closest venue to us was Cork.
- Some people weren't open-minded and dismissed our ideas.
- People were saying stuff that they thought was 'right' and not what they really thought.

3. Did you get enough information in the introduction so that you could understand the issue being discussed?



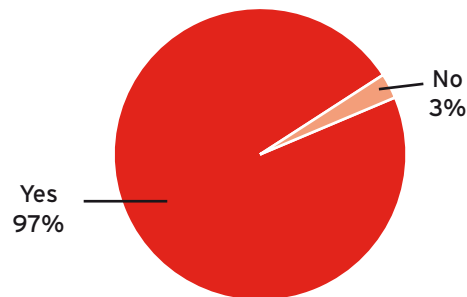
In keeping with the philosophy that the participants should set the agenda themselves, there was little information presented in the introduction at the outset of each consultation. Two facts, as outlined in Chapter 1 of this report, were included on a written fact sheet and read out at the opening of the day. Participants were also introduced to the methodology being used (Open Space Technology) and given a demonstration by staff. The vast majority of participants (95%) were happy that this level of information enabled them to understand the issue being discussed.

4. How easy/difficult did you find it to contribute to the workshop session?



The trained facilitators were briefed to create informal, safe spaces in the workshops where young people could contribute freely and openly. It is testament to the facilitators and to the willingness of the participants to contribute that 89% of participants had no difficulty in contributing to the workshop sessions.

5. Did you like the use of the 'Open Space' for the workshops?



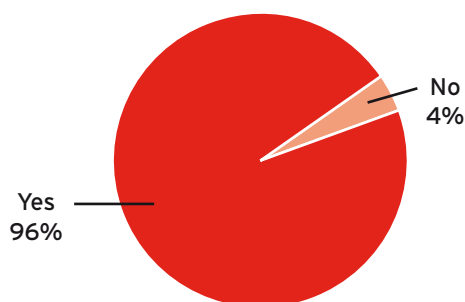
Practically all participants (97%) enjoyed the use of the Open Space as a methodology at the consultations. While, in practice, many participants did not make great use of the 'law of two feet' (which allows participants to move between workshops at any point), it was appreciated that it was possible to do this. Participants also liked the opportunity to choose what workshops they participated in.

Among the comments in relation to the Open Space were:

- Everyone has an opinion to state, but quiet people can be overlooked.
- People kept butting in on your opinion.
- Yes, but also if two [workshops] appealed to you, you had to choose.
- It was easier to speak your mind in the small group workshops.
- It was savage.
- You could participate in what you found interesting.
- Nice relaxed workshops, with plenty of input from across the board.
- However, you might have wanted to go to two [workshops] in one session and none in the other.
- During the workshop, opinions should be asked by going around asking people, not by asking them to volunteer.
- It was nice to have a chance to express our views for once, as opposed to being preached at.
- Spread groups out more.

- The ice-breakers really worked.
- Everyone was learning from everybody.
- Everyone was in one room and could hear each other.
- More time should be given.
- Yes, they [workshops] were well organised.
- Very simple and extremely clear.
- It helped to have the space to get to listen to each other.
- It was hard to hear.
- Patronising.

6. Do you feel that you were listened to at the consultations today?



Again, the great majority of participants (96%) felt that they were listened to at the consultations. A number questioned whether the information would be acted upon or whether the report on the consultations would be taken into meaningful consideration.

7. Is there anything that you would like to change about the consultations?

The young people were hugely appreciative of the opportunity to express their views on the solutions to alcohol misuse. Many noted that they would not make any changes to the consultations since *'they were terrific'*, although there were a number of calls to have such consultations more often.

There were a number of additional comments, including:

- Some people interrupt others.
- Each person is singled out to speak in turn.
- More fun.
- More time.
- Maybe the leaders should choose the group to spread the people out.
- We were made feel like we *can* make a difference.
- Despite being listened to at this level, I hate to say it but I have very little faith that the Government will, or could, change anything.
- More input from members of youth committees and youth parliaments.
- Some of the opinions today weren't informed.
- More of a promise that something would be done at national level.
- Not really; if anything, make them [consultations] longer.
- More interaction.
- Have more of them [consultations] on popular issues.
- Well organised.
- More information about the uniform - if we had to wear it or not.
- Sessions were very good and interesting.
- To give my views on *all* the workshops.

- More of them should be held, with a greater number of students.
- More games at the start, so people get to know each other.
- Better introduction needed.
- Make people put up their hand when making a comment.
- Better food, with desserts.
- They were terrific, great, savage, deadly!
- There should be more of these consultations.
- Make it public.
- Deadly, but do it more often.

Appendix 4: Programme for CYPF Training

Held on Tuesday, 3 July - Thursday, 5 July 2007 at Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone

Tuesday, 3 July

2.30pm	Arrival at Hodson Bay Hotel, followed by lunch
3.30pm	Registration
4.00pm	Meeting of group Group contract Explain about new evaluator
4.30pm	Training session (Open Space facilitation)
6.00pm	Free time (leisure centre and swimming pool)
7.30pm	Dinner
8.30pm	Videos (entertainment)

Wednesday, 4 July: Facilitation and administrative training

10.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the consultation about? Roles and jobs, note-taking• Facilitation, confidentiality, ethical issues, listening
10.20am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two exercises on taking positions and understanding the views and feelings of others• Corners
11.15am	<i>Break</i>
11.45am	Numbered Heads Together – a game about listening skills
12.15pm	Model role plays in three groups: <i>Theme: If there were enough alcohol-free recreational facilities for teenagers, would they reduce their use of alcohol?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principles• Roles/characters
1.00pm	<i>Lunch</i>
2.00pm	Dress rehearsal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Space session on alcohol to identify issues for discussion.• Role play by CYPF members - three groups with one facilitator and one co-facilitator.• Discussion on role plays in groups, using numbered sheets and numbered heads. Roles/characters
3.00pm	Full group discussion on issues arising from role plays
3.20pm	Group exercise on administrative skills
4.00pm	Close of day's training

Thursday, 5 July

10.00am	Work on OMC website Involvement in consumer group Department of Health and Children/HSE
11.00am	<i>Break</i>
11.30am	Wrap-up and evaluation
1.00pm	<i>Lunch</i>
2.00pm	Close of residential

Appendix 5: List of adult staff

Every effort was made to limit the number of adult staff necessary to conduct the consultations. In keeping with child protection guidelines, at least one adult staff member per 8 young people was on site at all times. The following table lists the adult staff involved in the consultations:

Office of the Minister for Children (OMC)	Anne-Marie Brooks Sinéad Hanafin Anne O'Donnell
Project Consultant and Report Author	Olivia McEvoy, Cnag ar an Doras
Open Space Facilitator	Alan Hayes
Child Protection Designated Officer	Ruth Griffin
Facilitators	Anne-Marie Brooks, OMC Ruth Griffin Sinéad Hanafin, OMC Niamh McCrea Anne O'Donnell, OMC
CYPF Volunteers	
Co-facilitators	Sean Collum Eadaoin Comerford Dennis Drought Isobel Hayes Sheila O'Donnell
Administration	Thomas Atcha (Dáil na nÓg Councillor) Bridget Collins Eadaoin Comerford Claire Curran Alison Jack Anthony Keigher Aoife McCarthy Cormac Teevan
Database Administrator	Niamh McCrea

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