

## Statement on Drinkaware's Junior Cycle Alcohol Education Programme

After due consideration, the Board of Directors of Drinkaware has reluctantly made the very difficult decision that the charity will cease roll-out of the Junior Cycle Alcohol Education Programme in 2023. The first-of-its-kind primary prevention programme was initiated by the charity in 2017 to redress this identified gap in the educational needs of Ireland's young people. The programme has seen almost 340 teachers trained to raise awareness among 15,000 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students about the dangers of alcohol consumption. Teacher training has been provided by Drinkaware's Education Programme Manager and ex-Department of Education staff member and RSE national trainer and Regional Manager with SPHE Support Service, [Martha Sweeney](#).

The programme has been, and still is to date, the only national **prevention** programme available to schools, and it has been held in high regard by all participating schools, students and parents, as evident in the [independent evaluation carried out by Maynooth University](#) over the course of 3 years.

At no stage since the programme's inception has any State organisation asked Drinkaware to submit the programme for review, or to not engage with schools. Drinkaware has in fact attempted to directly engage with the HSE and Healthy Ireland regarding the programme and will continue to do so to explore how this important programme, that is evidence-based and in great demand from schools, teachers, parents and students, can be utilised to the benefit of schools and students going forward.

Any school which has been trained in the programme to date is entitled to and will receive the Junior Cycle Alcohol Education Programme manual and handbook.

Drinkaware's mission is to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse in Ireland, and the charity passionately believes that alcohol has no place in childhood and delaying the age of first drink remains a critical goal for the charity. To achieve this Drinkaware will continue to provide, support, education and information to parents. This work is already in progress and will include in 2023 new and updated resources, including booklets, campaigns and a programme of webinars/workshops.

Although this decision has been difficult for the Drinkaware team, we remain determined to achieve our vision of an Ireland where alcohol is not misused, and focused on delaying the age of first drink and empowering the public with information, tips, tools and advice. Drinkaware's Executive and Board continues to advocate collaboration and cooperation with all organisations working to achieve the same.

[The Drinkaware team](#) would like to take this opportunity to thank all participating schools, teachers, principals, students and parents for their involvement and dedication to the Junior Cycle Alcohol Education programme. Your support of the programme has been greatly valued by all members of the team especially, Drinkaware Education Programme Manager, [Martha Sweeney](#).