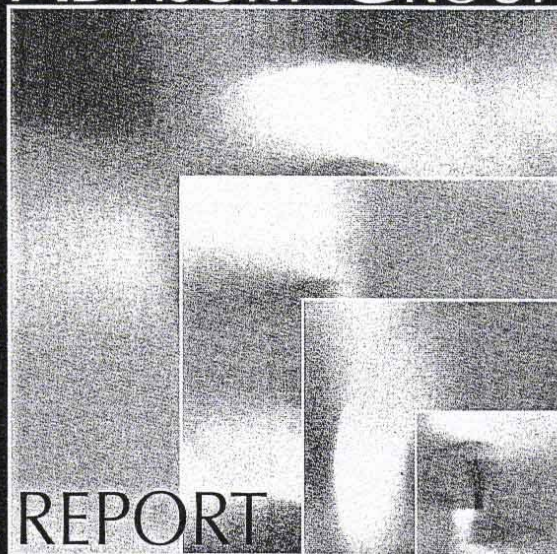


GARDA YOUTH POLICY

ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

ADVISORY GROUP



REPORT



AN Garda Síochána

INTRODUCTION

The level of alcohol abuse by young people in Ireland has been a cause of concern for some time. In recent years the media has focused attention on this issue, especially in the aftermath of a number of alleged alcohol related incidents in Dublin in the latter half of 2000. Whilst it is generally accepted that the problems associated with alcohol abuse relate to broader social issues and that any one agency or initiative in isolation will not solve these problems, it is incumbent on all stakeholders involved to address the problem in a fundamental manner.

An Garda Síochána is the agency with primary responsibility for enforcing legislation in relation to supply of alcohol to young people. It is also charged with dealing with any disorder problems arising from alcohol misuse. However, An Garda Síochána recognises the need for the problem to be addressed through a multi-agency partnership initiative that involves other agencies and the wider community. With a view to exploring this approach, the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána Pat Byrne, established a Group, representative of a variety of different interests to consider the issue in detail and to make recommendations aimed at addressing the problem. The membership of the Advisory Group, which held its inaugural meeting in December 2000 and completed its work in June 2001, is listed at Appendix A.

The Terms of Reference were: - *“To advise the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána as to the causes of public disorder and street violence associated with alcohol misuse and abuse by young people in the age group 12-25 years and on practical steps to help address these issues and to suggest strategies to incorporate a partnership approach with both short and long-term recommendations”*.

The Advisory Group recognised the strength of the drinking culture within our society. It believed that any initiative must accept that alcohol use is inherently a social activity and that a prescriptive message such as “Don’t Drink” would be unlikely to prove very effective. The Group saw the primary need as providing a challenge to the increasingly benign attitude of young people towards alcohol misuse. In this regard the attitudinal change towards drink driving which has come about in recent years, was seen as an important, valuable and relevant example of how compliance with socially acceptable norms can be brought about through a combination of enforcement, education and moral persuasion.

The Group recognises that the problem of under-age drinking is one which must be addressed on a number of fronts. While the vast majority of licensees have responsible attitudes and policies towards providing alcohol to under-age persons, there are those who fail to do so. The involvement of representatives from the licensed trade on the Advisory Group was particularly welcome and the Group recommends that the sense of partnership, which pervaded all group discussions, should be fostered and expanded upon, where possible.

PREAMBLE

The Group decided that its first task should be to complete a review of the existing literature and research, with a view to establishing an accurate context within which to consider its remit. That process established some interesting and highly relevant information.

- The percentage of 16 year olds who report regularly using alcohol has increased from 32 to 39% over the past five years. (ESPAD 2000)
- Over half of Ireland's young people experiment with alcohol before the age of 12 years (HBSC, 1999)
- Among 9-11 year old boys, 15% reported having been 'really drunk', which increased to 28% in the 12-14 year olds. The corresponding figure for girls was 1 % in the younger age group and between 12-28% in the 12-14 age group (HBSC, 1999)
- "Binge Drinking" is defined within the European Union as being the consumption of 5 or more drinks in a row. 57% of 16 year olds reported 'binge drinking' (five or more drinks in a row) in the last 30 days (ESPAD, 2000)
- The economic cost of alcohol related problems in Ireland in 1999 was estimated to be £1.7 billion (Department of Health 2001)
- The use of spirits by 16 year olds has increased substantially in the past five years. (ESPAD 2000)
- The percentage of 16 year olds who reported having been drunk at least twenty times in their lives, increased from 19 to 25% in the period under comparison. (ESPAD 2000)
- 40% of violent crime, 78% of assaults and 88% of criminal damage committed in U.K. occurred whilst the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol, (Home Office, U.K. 1999 - Crime Reduction Paper no 3)
- A study in Manchester found that regular young drinkers were 25% more likely to have a criminal record than those who did not drink or only drank occasionally (Newcombe et al, 1995).
- 63% of young offenders incarcerated in one institution in Scotland, had been intoxicated at the time of commission of their offence (Heather 1981).

- In a 1999 survey of 14 – 15 year olds in Dublin, 25% said they never drink alcohol, 59% said they sometimes drank whilst 16% said they drink regularly (Brinkley et al 1999)
- The same survey Found the average age at which students had started drinking was 11.6 years (Brinkley et al 1999).

The research findings listed above help to establish the context within which consideration of the level of alcohol use and mis-use by young people has to be considered. While most of the research findings listed above refer to under 16 year olds, alcohol misuse by people in the 18 to 25 year bracket also gives cause for concern.

The reasons why young people engage in what can be termed ‘high risk alcohol use’, and the related public order problems which sometimes ensue, was considered in depth by the Group. It would appear that the strongest reason given as to why young people drink, is the acceptance if not expectation, that this is the cultural norm for young people and one to which they should aspire.

The Group listed some of the causes of alcohol related public disorder and street violence. These include: -

- Drinking to intoxication (seen as the main cause at the individual level)
- Intoxicated persons being served alcohol
- Irresponsible drinks promotions which encourage people to drink too much, too fast
- Overcrowding in pubs and clubs
- Un-regulated drinking in public places
- Supply of alcohol to, and consumption of alcohol by, under age persons
- Intoxicated persons congregating in large numbers at venues which are not well controlled, e.g. late night fast-food outlets

In addition to the basic causes listed above, the Group also identified the following broader societal issues as being of relevance to any discussion of the problem: -

- Few alcohol free environments for young people to congregate, meet
- More disposable income available to young people
- Less parental or community controls on young people

It is against this backdrop that the Advisory Group makes the recommendations set out in the pages that follow, grouped under various headings or “themes”.

THEME 1

TO PROMOTE THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL

RECOMMENDATION 1.1:

THE GARDA SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The existing Garda Schools Programme is aimed at 5th class in primary schools. The Group recommends the development of a Garda Secondary Schools Programme. This programme should be part of the Social, Personal, Health Education (S.P.H.E.) initiative currently in operation by the Department of Education and Science.

The development and introduction of this initiative will involve personnel at the Garda Schools Programme office in developing lesson plans for use by Gardai, in co-operation with staff from the Department of Education and Science. Since the Group's inception, preliminary work has commenced in this regard, but the Group recommends the programme be finalised and introduced as a matter of urgency.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2:

FOCUSED SPORT RELATED INITIATIVES

Last winter the Garda Community Relations Section, in conjunction with Assistant Commissioner Dublin Metropolitan Region, developed and introduced an initiative to address the issue of youth drinking and associated public order problems around Leinster Senior Schools Cup rugby marches. This initiative was organised with the co-operation of the school managers, parents and the Irish Rugby Football Union Leinster Branch. An evaluation of the initiative has been generally positive. An outline of this programme is set out in Appendix B.

The Group assessed this programme and its impact, and recommends the introduction of a similar type of initiative into schools engaged in other sporting competitions for young people, particularly those that would attract any significant number of supporters.

The implementation of this programme would in the first instance, involve Garda personnel working with the relevant sporting authorities to put in place the necessary structures required to ensure success. The Group further recommends that in those areas where "Development Officers" have been appointed, these key people should be utilised in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3:

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A significant proportion of young Irish people look to their parents for a lead in relation to what is acceptable behaviour. In order to assess this, the Group recommends the dissemination of the 'responsible use of alcohol' message to parents. In the preparation stage of this initiative, the National Parents Council would be invited to bring forward suggestions as to the most effective means of involving parents.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4:

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The group recognises the overwhelming need to establish a high quality, relevant and sustainable communications programme that would start to challenge the notion that the misuse of alcohol is socially acceptable. This would need to involve the use of those media most regularly used by young people, in the delivery of the message. Furthermore, great care would have to be paid to choosing the most effective conduit (e.g. schools, clubs, sporting organisations) by which young people could be targeted with this campaign.

The Group recognises the somewhat intangible nature of its recommendations in this first section. However, over time it is through communication with young people, their parents, and all those who influence and interact with them that any fundamental shift in attitudes to alcohol, can be achieved. The Group considered being prescriptive about the nature of such a communications programme. However, it is the Group's strongly held view that, to be successful, such an initiative must be conceived and developed on a national level. Having discussed this at some length the Advisory Group felt that the resources required to undertake this task would be significant. The Group recommends that the Commissioner should seek Government approval and funding for a national Communications/Education plan, as a priority. The content of this package should be developed in co-operation with the Department of Health and Children, so as to ensure that it complements the 'Alcohol Awareness Campaign' which has been developed by that Department.

RECOMMENDATION 1.5:

EDUCATION INITIATIVE WITH YOUTH AND SPORTING AGENCIES

The 'National Youth Health Programme' operates through the National Youth Council of Ireland. It involves the training of youth workers and the preparation and | publishing of resource materials around alcohol and substance abuse.

The Advisory Group believes the schools' curriculum is overloaded with information and therefore that other methods be found through which to target young people with important messages. As a result the Group recommends the establishment of a partnership approach with the existing youth organisations, sports bodies (including the National Sports Council) to disseminate the information to young people. Material prepared under *recommendation 1.1* above might be adapted for use in this regard.

This recommendation would involve consultations with the National Youth Council, as well as the Youth Service agencies that are currently engaged with An Garda. Síochána in the operation of Garda Youth Crime Diversion Projects. Preliminary discussions with these agencies would indicate their support for the initiative.

THEME 2

MAKING AGE A FACTOR

RECOMMENDATION ,2.1:

PROOF OF AGE SCHEME

The Group regards the current national age-card scheme operated by An Garda Síochána as of great importance in preventing the purchase of alcohol by under-age persons. The Group recommends that the present scheme should be more widely advertised through the media and by a co-operative venture with the retailers.

The Group also recommends removing the present £5 application fee for age-cards, in order to increase the numbers using the cards.

In order to fully address the ‘proof of age’ issue relating to those seeking to purchase alcohol, it is the Group’s belief that the introduction of a mandatory national identity card system would have positive benefits. The ‘Public Services Card’, which is to replace the current R.S.I. card issued by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, could serve to fulfil this need. The Advisory Group recommends that the possibility of incorporating the present Age-Card with the new Public Services Card should be explored by Community Relations Section personnel, in co-operation with officers from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. In this regard, the Group recommends that the Public Services Card should have sufficient information to allow its use as an ‘Age Card’.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1:

ALTERNATIVE ENTERTAINMENT VENUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Alcohol is the dominant feature of entertainment venues in Ireland, even those that cater primarily for young people. This feature is the primary reason why it is so difficult for young people to withstand the pressure from peers etc. to engage in alcohol consumption.

The Group recognises the need to provide alcohol-free entertainment venues for young people. Whilst the provision of such venues is obviously not within the remit of An Garda Síochána, the members of the Group are aware of a number of initiatives in existence throughout the country, in this regard. The Group are satisfied that the ‘No Name Clubs’ are just one example of an alternative to alcohol-based entertainment, which provides a suitable and workable model to facilitate the realisation of this objective.

To be specific, the Advisory Group requests that the Commissioner should instruct District Officers to establish formal links with No-Name Club Regional Development Officers, with a view to facilitating the setting-up of new clubs in their own area. An outline of the workings of the No-Name Club movement is set out at Appendix C.

THEME 3

TO REDUCE PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

The members of the Advisory Group expressed grave concern at the research finding that many young people drink with the express motive of getting drunk. The group were of the view that An Garda Siochana should continue to enforce the relevant legislation in relation to the sale of alcohol to minors, public disorder etc. This enforcement should involve the deployment of Garda resources to areas of known regular disorder (hotspots). Where evidence exists that adults have engaged in supplying alcohol to minors, prosecutions should be instituted if possible. The Group was also cognisant of the responsibilities of the management and staff of licensed premises in this regard. Taking account of the foregoing, the Group make the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1:

FORMULATION OF LICENSED VINTNERS' CHARTER

The licensed trade has very obvious responsibilities in relation to the prevention of public drunkenness both on their own premises and after customers have left such licensed premises. The group recommends the formulation of a Charter of Best Practice, to be adopted by the licensed vintners. Such a charter would include policy in relation to the following:-

- Refusal to sell alcohol to intoxicated person
- The Responsible Serving of Alcohol programme, which has been developed by the Department of Health and Children in close co-operation with the Drinks Industry, should be expanded and it is envisaged that the Gardai should have a greater involvement in the programme. The programme is designed for those working in the licensed trade and promotes strategies to prevent intoxication, underage drinking and drink driving.
- Drinks promotions must not be used to encourage heavy/binge drinking.
- The design of licensed premises to avoid factors which are known to contribute to alcohol-related aggression, such as poor bar layout etc. In this regard, Garda Crime Prevention Offices trained in "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" would be made available to offer advice.
- Use of plastic glasses in appropriate circumstances.

The implementation of this initiative would in the main be the responsibility of the Vintners Federation of Ireland, the Licensed Vintners Association and the National Off Licensees Association.

The Advisory Group included representatives of each of these organisations, all of whom intimated their willingness to implement this recommendation. An Garda Síochána will support the establishment of this scheme through liaison with the licensed trade during the development phase, and on-going co-operation in achieving its objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2:

PUB/CLUB WATCH SCHEME

The group recognise the value of fostering positive relationships between local Gardai and the licensed trade. In order to ensure an on-going dialogue, the Group recommends the establishment of pub-watch schemes in appropriate locations. These schemes should be operated in similar fashion to existing business-watch schemes in which a designated Garda is tasked with carrying out regular visits to the premises in the scheme, the dissemination of information to participants and organising meetings/information sessions etc. The ethos of the schemes will be to identify problems and to resolve them in a partnership approach.

A template for the establishment and operation of the Pub/Club Watch Scheme should be incorporated into the Charter of Good Practice referred to in 2.1 above. The Advisory Group urges An Garda Síochána to support the establishment of this scheme through working with the vintners in agreeing the content of the template and through on-going involvement in the setting up and operation of local Pub, Club Watch schemes.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3:

ADOPTION OF BYE-LAWS TO PREVENT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PUBLIC AND USE OF ON THE SPOT FINES.

Each local authority should be requested to adopt bye-laws which make the consumption of alcohol in public places an offence, unless specifically authorised. The Group believes this request should be routed through the Chief Superintendents who represent An Garda Síochána on the City and County Development Boards.

Consideration should be given to the introduction of a fine-on-the-spot system for use in cases where bye-laws are contravened and in cases of public drunkenness.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4:

ARREST REFERRAL SCHEME

Evidence exists which suggests that a proportion of those arrested for drink-related offences are regular recidivist offenders. The group recommends the establishment of counselling, treatment services for such regular offenders. The Health Boards are the agencies seen as having the greatest responsibility in relation to the employment of qualified personnel etc.

Persons who are identified as regularly re-offending, or have been arrested for such offences should be referred to the counseling/treatment services provided by the Health Boards. The Group is aware of the constraints imposed in this regard by Data Protection legislation and suggest that in the absence of amending legislation, the scheme might be established on a voluntary basis. Such a scheme should be placed on the agenda of each of the regional Drug Task Forces, recently established under the National Drug Strategy. In order to progress the implementation of this recommendation, the Group recommends that it should be introduced on a pilot basis for a twelve-month period, in one region in order to assess effectiveness.

THEME 4

REDUCTION IN ALCOHOL RELATED VIOLENCE

Research findings previously referred to, indicate a strong causal link between excessive alcohol consumption and violent behaviour. The Advisory Group see the need to reduce such violence as vital in solving the problems associated with alcohol misuse.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1:

TARGET HOTSPOTS

The Group recognise the resource constraints facing An Garda Siochana at times of peak demand for service. One way in which this issue can be addressed is through a more focused deployment of resources to areas of regular trouble, or hotspots.

& The Group recommends the introduction of a policy of localised mapping of violent incidents in order to ascertain the areas which have the greatest policing need. In this regard, the Group suggests that accident and emergency units might be used to gather data from patients being treated for injuries resulting from violence. The locations where such incidents occurred might be made available to Gardai to assist in mapping of hotspots and to supplement existing Garda data. The information thus gathered will be collated by local Garda managers and used to direct their resource deployment strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2:

REGULATION OF VENUES THAT ATTRACT LARGE ATTENDANCES.

The Advisory Group is well aware of the potential for violent confrontation where significant numbers of persons congregate, having engaged in the consumption of alcohol beforehand. Many of the reported drink related violent incidents occur in the environs of fast-food outlets after licensed premises have closed. The group recommends the establishment of a regulatory system for fast-food outlets, which would determine their opening hours, security standards and other appropriate matters.

The establishment of such a system is likely to require legislation to allow the making of local bye-laws.

CONCLUSION

The members of this Advisory Group engaged in fairly extensive and considered debate on all matters around the complex social and behavioural issues coming within its terms of reference. In addition, the Group members consulted widely between those meetings in order to progress matters in a thorough but realistic fashion.

The Group was anxious to make a series of practical recommendations that if believed could have immediate impact and that tackled the underlying causes of the problem, rather than simply addressing short-term concerns. The achievement of the targets set out in the Report will demand a significant effort by all of the different agencies involved. Whilst the problems associated with alcohol misuse by young people are for society as a whole to address, the Group members are confident that with a multi-agency, multi-faceted approach, the issue can be addressed -in a worthwhile and meaningful fashion.

APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP OF YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

- Mr. Tadg O’Sullivan, Chief Executive, Vinters Federation of Ireland
- Mr. Frank Fell, Chief Executive, Licensed Vintners’ Association
- Mr. Fintan Drury, Drury Communications Ltd.
- Mr. Martin Tansey, Probation and Welfare Service
- Mr. Jimmy Redmond, Chairperson, National Off-Licence Association
- Dr. Anne Hope, Consultant, Department of Health and Children
- Dr. Mark Morgan, St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra
- Ms. Rose Tully, President, National Parents Council, Post Primary
- Mr. Kieran O’Dwyer, Research Unit, Templemore
- Mr. Eamonn Waters, National Youth Council of Ireland
- Inspector Dave Sheehan, Waterford City Garda Station
- Chief Superintendent Catherine Clancy, Community Relations, Harcourt Square
- Inspector Michael Feehan, National Juvenile Office, Community Relations, Harcourt Square
- Sergeant Naomi de Ris, National Age Card Office, Community Relations, Harcourt Square

APPENDIX B

GARDA LEINSTER BRANCH RUGBY SCHOOLS SENIOR CUP INITIATIVE

Following upon concerns having been expressed about the level of drinking and related anti-social behaviour by young people, especially during and after sporting occasions, An Garda Síochána sought to examine how the message in relation to the adoption of responsible behaviour by young people might be delivered. The discussion which ensued resulted in the piloting of an initiative around the Leinster Senior Schools Cup competition.

Twenty-one schools were targeted by Gardai who had experience in dealing with and talking to students of varying ages. They spoke to all class years, from 1st through to 6th, with special emphasis on the senior classes. Topics covered included the issue of drinking (both underage and legal) and the consequences of same, the use of drugs, and looked at the area of public order and violent behaviour with a view to understanding the impact of injury, court proceedings and potential convictions for those involved. The themes of respect and responsibility were debated, emphasising the importance of the individual's responsible behaviour at all times.

The school visits and their impact was evaluated, with a view to extending the initiative to all schools with sporting influences. It was decided that such a talk to senior level students was most beneficial for both the pupils involved and the school itself. The participants also believed that good behaviour should be acknowledged by those in authority and encouraged among young people for all future events, whether sporting or otherwise.

APPENDIX C

THE NO NAME CLUB

The 'No-Name Club' organisation is a national movement of affiliated clubs, which was founded in 1978, in response to the need to provide entertainment venues for young people where they could enjoy themselves in an alcohol-free environment. Since its inception the 'No-Name Club' movement has expanded to the four corners of Ireland,

The ethos of 'No-Name Club' is that it respects the individuals right to drink or not to drink and it supports the individual's right to his moderation or to his abstinence. 'No-Name Club' sees abstinence from alcohol-use as perfectly socially acceptable. Very often, society seems to condemn abstinence as if the person who practices it is, in some way, socially inferior.

'No-Name Club' encourages a lifestyle where alcohol is not necessary, and especially so in the 15 year to 20 year age group. It encourages young people to take control of their own lives, in ways that are good and wholesome by being self-reliant, considerate of others and concerned about the quality of life in the community in which they live.