



Young People Speak Out Report



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Community First Young People Speak Out (YPSO) Event

1. Project background

In the UK, alcohol is one of the most common substances used by young people. Every year there are around 13,000 hospital admissions linked to young substance misuse (Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care). 15,000 young people require access to specialist support for alcohol misuse. By the time that they are 15 years old, 81% of young people have had their first alcoholic drink (Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use amongst Young People in England, 2009). Alcohol abuse is also related to sexual health and pregnancy. One in eight 15-16 year old girls has had unprotected sex after drinking alcohol (Department of Education, 2012).

There is therefore an urgent need for effective prevention and intervention projects aimed at addressing the pressing concern of alcohol misuse amongst young people. Evidence clearly shows that young people are impacted best when they see role models amongst their peers. Youth-led projects have the potential to change values and attitudes towards alcohol misuse within local communities. Therefore, it is important that young people are trusted, supported and given the opportunity to speak out and take leadership in issues they see affecting them and their peers.

Thus, YPSO promotes youth agency and empowerment. It does not aim to tell young people what to do, and how to do it, but rather it aims to create an environment whereby they can do it themselves. One of the initial ways that was identified through listening to young people was the development of a youth debate in Brierley Hill. This report is a summary of the proceedings of this debate, and it also comments on the legacy for YPSO, post-debate.

2. Aims and objectives

To host an interactive youth discussion and debate that will raise awareness of the problems with alcohol abuse. The aim was also to contribute to the Brierley Hill Community First priority two which is:

'To support activities which enrich the lives of those most in need, in particular young people, the elderly and those with special needs'

To develop a group of young volunteers who will continue the legacy of the YPSO debate, and develop activities according the needs of their communities.

3. Project development

The project was supported and developed by five core volunteers, who helped with the design of the leaflets, t-shirts, event organisation, logistics, food and drink preparation, sharing knowledge, developing the magazine and booklet, researching and communications. Before the project began a thorough estimate of costing was conducted and 'value for money' was achieved for all purchased items.

4. Project Implementation

The YPSO event was completed on the scheduled date of November 22nd at 6pm. Although there was severe rain on the night of the event, the decision was taken not to cancel. The rain led to the cancellation of the facilitator as she was unable to attend due to flooding within her area. Therefore, the event was primarily led by the volunteers and the young people in attendance. Despite the

challenging weather conditions **21 people** were in attendance of the YPSO event. It was widely agreed that this was a considerable achievement, taking into account the difficult weather conditions.



Kevin Collins: Lead volunteer, helping to facilitate dialogue

YPSO was highly participatory and interactive. Many questions and issues were raised throughout the group, which showed that the event environment was youth-friendly. The topics of the event were as follows:

4.1 Are parents to blame for young people's drinking habits?

This aspect of the debate was designed to stimulate a discussion around blame. It was not intended to focus only on parents; however, the use of this term was to stimulate a general debate around blame. The young people who attended this event did not reach a consensus around who was to blame, however they did share many interesting ideas. One young female described blame in the following *'There is not anybody to blame, not parents, not the media, nobody but the individual. If I want to drink I will drink, nobody will force me to the bottle'*

Another young man disagreed and said the following:

'Nobody may force you, but you can be more encouraged to drink through bad parenting and celebrity cultures. Believe it or not, our role models in society have a great impact on us'.

Although there was not a general consensus upon who was to blame, most young people did attribute blame to something. Those with immediate family members who had abused alcohol described that experience as having a significant impact on their lives. One young woman discussed how the culture of alcoholism in the home made her associate alcohol with negative experiences, therefore she did not drink. Another said how the glorification of alcohol in the home and media had a significant impact on her drinking behaviour. Hence, there were differing views and experiences which shaped the perception of blame and of alcohol.

4.2 What's the attraction to alcohol for young people?

Before this question was discussed a video of an advertisement was shown to the young people. After which the question of messaging and the attraction to alcohol was discussed. In this aspect of the debate the young people described the social image of alcoholism among young people in society. Music videos, celebrities and advertisements were all perceived as having a significant impact on the perception of alcoholism. However, there were other components outside visual culture that were perceived as having an impact on the attitudes of young people to alcohol. One of which was the cheapness and availability of alcohol, particularly within nightclubs. Cheap promotions such as 'triple for singles', which allows young people to have excessive amounts of alcohol for the price of a single drink. The availability of cheap alcohol on the Brierley Hill High Street, were all contributors to the attraction of alcohol.

4.3 Defining solutions and affecting change

The solutions that were defined by young people at the YPSO event were as follows:

- More youth ambassadors/role models within society
- Making it more difficult for young people to access alcohol
- Raising the price of alcohol
- Reducing the number of alcohol promotions within nightclubs which promote excessive binge drinking
- Engaging young people in alternative activities to combat against boredom
- More educational campaigns led by young people to raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol abuse
- The promotion of inter-generational dialogue between parents and young people about the dangers of alcohol abuse



4.4 Spend allocation to date

Item	Budgeted cost	Total Spend
Refreshments	£75.00	£68.00
Equipment (PA)	£50.00	£0.00
Printed T-Shirts (with design)	£350.00	£304.00
Facilitators	£50.00	£0.00
Leaflets	£30.00	£13.00
Posters	£35.00	£0.00
Room	£60.00	£51.00
	Total budgeted cost to date	Total spend to date
	£650.00	£436.00

5. Project Evaluation

The young people were given a short questionnaire in order to evaluate the event. However, most of the evaluation was completed by these young people writing on a post-it note. These young people were asked to describe what they loved about the event, and what they would like to improve the general feedback was as follows:

What they loved	What they would like improved
The style of the event	Live music
The friendliness of the facilitation	More young people from across the borough
Their voices and opinions felt valued	More time spent on discussing solutions
The refreshments were of a good quality	A variety of presentations, talks or personal stories from young people.
Made like-minded friends	More material handed out at the event itself giving young people more facts about the dangers.
The ability to share, learn and discuss	

6. Project Legacy

After the debate ten young people declared their interest in volunteering for the YPSO project. It was agreed that it was imperative that a post-debate meeting was developed in order to continue with the planning. This meeting was held on the Friday the 14th of December 2012, where ideas such as developing ambassadors, engaging through social media and conducting further research were discussed.



The YPSO team will organise a further meeting in January 2013, and work towards finding funding for their youth-led outreach project.

7. Conclusion

In sum, the YPSO event was highly successful due to the hard work, commitment and organisation of volunteers within the community. Although there was a significant challenge posed by the weather, the decision not to cancel the event proved to be a good one as great feedback was provided by the attendees. There will be some scope for learning and improvement for future events, however, YPSO has left a lasting impact upon young people. This is evidenced by the amount of young people who have decided to volunteer to continue the legacy. A post-YPSO meeting has already taken place with young people deciding to become volunteer youth ambassadors and contribute towards developing a project plan. Spending was done efficiently, carefully and with the aim of achieving value for money. Therefore, the project has thus far spent less than initially budgeted for, as thorough cost analysis was conducted throughout the development of this event.

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