

## **Community Wellbeing Select Committee**

### **A review of the ‘hidden harm’ of alcohol and its impact on young people and the family or caring environment**

#### **Chairman’s Foreword:**

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Community Wellbeing Select Committee which details the findings and recommendations following the Committee’s review into the hidden harm of alcohol and its effects on children, young people and the family or caring environment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took part in the review, a list of which is provided below.

Throughout the review I and the Committee have considered detailed accounts from a range of stakeholders including young people, teachers, Council officers, the police and carers. What has been particularly illuminating is the extent to which young people are adversely affected by other people’s drinking.

Whilst the Select Committee set out to find areas of improvement, excellent partnership working and best practice has been discovered, which has demonstrated the commitment that exists in Trafford to improve the ways we share intelligence with partners and had the effect of improving services, in this case to reduce the impact of alcohol misuse on children and young people.

The recommendations of this report provide practical measures to improve the way Trafford Council can support those affected by the hidden harm of alcohol.

#### **Composition of the Select Committee:**

Councillor S Anstee – Chairman  
Councillor S Adshead – Vice Chairman  
Councillor D Bunting  
Councillor M Cordingley  
Councillor P Myers  
Councillor D Quayle  
Councillor B Shaw  
Councillor K Summerfield  
Councillor N Taylor

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is widely recognised by local and central government agencies and voluntary sector organisations that children and young people suffer long term negative effects of alcohol abuse as a result of their own and other people's drinking.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. In the UK it is estimated that there are between 780,000 and 1.3 million children affected by parental alcohol problems<sup>2</sup>. More than half (52%) of pupils aged between 11 and 15 have had at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetimes. This figure increases with age from 16% of 11 year olds to 81% of 15 year olds. However, the proportion of pupils who have never drunk alcohol has risen in recent years, from 39% in 2003 to 48% in 2008.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3. The vast majority of people in Trafford drink sensibly. Alcohol-related disease and death rates are considerably lower than the regional average and are about the same as the England average, as is alcohol-related crime. Although in a regional context Trafford is fairly moderate, it ranks less well in comparison with other local authorities nationally for hazardous, harmful and binge drinking.
- 1.4. Early alcohol initiation (e.g. before age 15) and drinking in larger quantities in childhood and adolescence are associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including the initiation of drug use; suicide ideation; violence; injury; depression and school absenteeism. Such drinking also increases the risks of developing chronic health and other problems (e.g. alcohol dependency, illicit drug use, liver disease) in later life. Those initiating alcohol use before the age of 13 are particularly vulnerable to adverse health outcomes.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.5. The Committee recognises that the primary responsibility for the development of children's relationship to alcohol rests with their parents and aims to develop recommendations which support the development of a whole family approach to addressing hidden harm in Trafford.
- 1.6. The Committee has developed recommendations which are designed to complement the recommendations of the Every Child Matters Trafford Hidden Harm Strategy 2008, a report and action plan of the Hidden Harm Steering Group and Trafford Parenting Strategy 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> (Childline 2006; Alcohol Concern 2008; Home Office 2007; Donaldson 2008; National Audit Office 2008; Hidden Harm Steering Group 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, HM Government, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England, NHS Information Centre (2008)

<sup>4</sup> Teenage drinking, alcohol availability and pricing: a cross sectional study of risk and protective factors for alcohol related harms in school children (Liverpool John Moores University 2009)

- 1.7. In this review, the Community Wellbeing Select Committee considers how Trafford works to address the hidden harm of alcohol and its impact on children, families and the caring environment. It presents an understanding of good practice in Trafford and more widely.
- 1.8. It is impossible for a broadly-scoped project such as this to consider the range of issues and disciplines in the same detail as the more focused work of individual partners. Rather, the insights of scrutiny reviews should be seen as complementary; providing a fresh look from their unique perspective; challenging existing thinking; and providing signposts to the most important issues and to promising approaches.
- 1.9. The review presents a framework for more detailed analysis and policy development by partners. Therefore, the review is not intended to be a full audit of alcohol harm reduction services in Trafford.
- 1.10. **Definitions**
- 1.11. The definition of alcohol misuse provided by the World Health Organisation is as follows: 'The use of alcohol for a purpose not consistent with legal or medical guidelines.'<sup>5</sup>
- 1.12. Hidden Harm is defined by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs as 'Parental problem substance use and its actual and potential effects on children'<sup>6</sup> and this definition can equally be applied to the misuse of alcohol.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

- 2.1. The review aimed to develop an understanding of the hidden harm of alcohol in Trafford and its impact on the family or caring environment and on young people's futures. It aimed to understand the extent of the problem in Trafford and the way in which drinking cultures are passed on, within families, peer groups and in local areas.
- 2.2. The Committee identified the following objectives:
- 2.3. To understand the messages that children and young people are receiving about alcohol in Trafford, including how their attitudes to alcohol are influenced.
- 2.4. Building on existing best practice, to identify measures to help address alcohol misuse among children and young people in Trafford.
- 2.5. To develop recommendations to better support children and young people vulnerable to drinking and the effects of drinking by their families or carers;

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<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation Lexicon of alcohol and drug terms, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

<sup>6</sup> Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 2003

- 2.6. To explore methods to encourage a strong Partnership approach to tackling the retail of alcohol in the Borough and its availability to under age people.
- 2.7. The review aimed to understand what makes young people in Trafford choose or decline alcohol and asked the following questions:
- How do the messages Trafford young people receive about alcohol affect their relationship with it and what attitudes to alcohol do young people take forward into adulthood?
  - How do young people in Trafford obtain alcohol and what is likely to make them drink or not drink?
  - How does Trafford help young people who are growing up in an alcohol misusing family environment?
  - What support is in place to help young people recognise when they, or those close to them, may need help with reducing their alcohol consumption?
  - What do young people in Trafford think would help them, their peers and their families or care givers reduce their alcohol intake to safe recommended levels, or less?
  - What are the opportunities for Trafford to support young people in developing and maintaining healthy alcohol management strategies going forward into adulthood?
  - How does Trafford use its licensing powers to make alcohol inaccessible to young people and convey messages to them and their families and care givers about alcohol accessibility and young people?

### **3. Summary of Recommendations**

- 3.1. The Committee found a range of innovations in the area of reducing the hidden harm of alcohol for young people and the family or caring environment in Trafford. Voluntary sector and government agencies in Trafford are increasingly working together and there are significant opportunities to build on this joined up approach. It is necessary to ensure that the excellent innovations of Partners continue to be developed through a 'think family' approach.

### **3.2. Recommendation 1: Providing 'signposting' and information**

- a) To develop a resource pack and training for staff in all schools to enable them to support a child or young person who is impacted on by alcohol abuse, either directly or indirectly by their parent, carer or relative.
- b) To create web-based information resources which are accessible to all young people, to educate and signpost them to find support in Trafford and elsewhere specifically about problem drinking by the young person, their parent, carer or relative, supported by a poster campaign to be distributed to Trafford schools.
- c) That the Dramatically Healthy production, 'Mine's a Pint' be promoted to head teachers as an innovative method of educating young people about the detrimental effects of alcohol.

### **3.3. Recommendation 2: Tackling access to alcohol by young people**

- a) To publicise more widely and more innovatively the potential penalties of adults buying alcohol for those under the legal age limit.
- b) To develop new methods or strengthen existing means of tackling the under age sale of alcohol from smaller off licences in the Borough.
- c) That Trafford Council IT, Communications and the Licensing department work collaboratively to explore methods for assisting the public to contact the licensing section more efficiently; to explore the use of a hotline; and, to update the Licensing section's webpage to be more customer-focused.
- d) That communication is made to all premises licensed for the 'on sale' of alcohol in the Borough to request them to promote the sale of alcohol free beer and wine.

### **3.4. Recommendation 3: Assisting young people and their families to get help and support**

- a) That the Children and Young People's Service undertakes a review of access to counselling services for children and young people.
- b) That consideration is given, when a new Alcohol Service is commissioned, to the importance of alcohol workers and their significance in supporting relatives of those with alcohol dependency.

- c) That the new Alcohol Service links with Trafford's Parenting Strategy and takes account of the research into risk and protective factors for problem behaviours among young people, undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- d) To ensure, at the earliest opportunity, that referral forms for children and young people to access Trafford Young Carers are available at the Talkshop (Sale Waterside) and in schools.
- e) That training is offered to carers directly in order to equip them with the skills and information they need to support the people they care for.
- f) That formal communication is made to the appropriate Minister, by the most appropriate means, to make him/her aware of the disadvantages of ring fencing budgets for tackling drug misuse.

### **3.5. Recommendation 4: Informing Members**

- a) That safeguarding training is offered to all Members.
- b) That all Members are made aware of their role as an interested party and encouraged to take up training on their responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003.

## **4. In Scope**

Children and young people up to the age of 18, their families or carers and peer groups. The review focuses on the messages that children and young people are receiving about alcohol in Trafford, including how their attitudes to alcohol are influenced. It also considers the way in which drinking cultures are passed on in Trafford, within families, peer groups and in local areas.

### **4.1. Out of Scope**

The Committee wished to focus on the hidden harm of alcohol and its effects on young people and the family or caring environment, therefore, crime, road traffic accidents caused by drink driving and locality focus for alcohol-related crime are outside the scope of the review. In addition, the increased demand on health treatment services or benefit payments is also outside the scope of the review, as is an exploration of the causes of increased alcohol consumption.

## 5. Guidelines about young people’s drinking

- 5.1. In January 2009 the Chief Medical Officer issued guidelines specifying the age at which children and young people could start to drink alcohol, how much is sensible for young people for drink, and how far young people’s drinking should be supervised by parents or carers.
- 5.2. The Chief Medical Officer’s recommendations are that:
- Children should not drink before they’re 15, if at all;
  - 15-17 year-olds should only drink when they’re supervised by a parent or other adult;
  - If 15-17 year-olds drink, they should do so infrequently and definitely on no more than one day a week. Parents and young people should be aware that drinking, even at age 15 or older, can be dangerous to health. Not drinking is the healthiest option for young people;
  - The importance of parents’ influence on their children’s drinking should be made clear. Parents and carers need advice on how to respond to alcohol use and misuse by children; and
  - Support services must be available for young people who have alcohol-related problems and their parents.
- 5.3. The Next Steps in *Safe. Sensible. Social; the National Alcohol Strategy* (HM Government, 2007) identify young people under 18 as a priority group, and aims to delay the onset of regular drinking (particularly among 11-15 year olds), reduce harm to young people who have started drinking, and create a culture where young people do not feel the need to drink.

<b>Key issues in Safe, Sensible, Social for local authorities</b>	
Priorities for local delivery	Alcohol strategies should be at the right strategic level – often Local Strategic Partnership, and taken forward by constituent bodies eg CDRPs, Strat Health Auth/ PCTs
	Strategies should treat alcohol misuse thematically and cover community safety/ crime; health; children & young people etc.
	Strategies should reflect evidence based assessment of alcohol problems, have clear targets linked to Public Service Agreements, Local Area Agreements (as appropriate), clear designated leads and monitor action/ progress
	Police and Justice Act 2006 requires local areas to have a strategy to tackle alcohol
Alcohol Expectations	To assist development of local alcohol strategies (LSP and CDRP level)
	Contribute to delivery of related PSA targets
	Develop strategic networks to set policy and scrutinise performance, and to set up networks of practitioners

	Promotion of alcohol as a cross cutting issue in LAAs
	Encourage and challenge local areas to manage alcohol as a cross cutting issue
Education/ Young People	Preventative and educational work with young people and parents, including work in schools to raise awareness of sensible drinking and the harms of alcohol misuse
	The development of processes to identify and refer children and young people at risk of harm from alcohol misuse to relevant bodies such as Children's Services/ Youth Inclusion and Support Panels
	Targeted work with parents whose drinking is causing risk to the well being of children, including interventions as necessary.

## 6. What is the extent of hidden harm in Trafford, nationally and regionally?

### 6.1. Young people's alcohol misuse nationally

6.2. The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care carries out an annual national survey of smoking, drinking and drug use among secondary school pupils aged 11 to 15 - *Lifestyle Statistics 2009; Statistics on Alcohol: England: Children's attitudes to drinking. Key findings for England and Wales:*

- Girls were slightly more likely than boys to agree that 'People of my age drink to be sociable with friends' (73% and 66% respectively).
- More than half of both boys and girls agreed that young people drink because of pressure from friends (56% of girls and 53% of boys).
- Girls were more likely than boys to agree that young people drink because it gives them confidence (52% and 36% respectively) and because they are bored (43% and 37% respectively).
- Six in ten (61%) thought it was OK for someone of their age to try alcohol at least once and four in ten (41%) that it was OK to drink alcohol once a week.
- 46% said they had never had a proper alcoholic drink, compared to 39% in 2003.
- 41% thought it was OK to drink alcohol once a week and 17% thought it was OK to get drunk at least once a week.



- More than half aged between 11 and 15 have had at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetimes. This increases with age from 21% of 11 year olds to 82% of 15 year olds.
- The proportion 11 to 15 year olds who have never taken alcohol has risen in recent years, from 39% in 2003 to 45% in 2006.

6.3. The Economic and Social Research Council: *Branded Consumption and Social Identification: Young People and Alcohol*, considers what young people see alcohol as representing for them:

- Drinking alcohol is socially important in young people's lives.
- Practices differ across gender, and less so across class.
- Advertising reflects the idea of drinking as 'fun'.
- Overall, government policy needs to change to reflect how young people use alcohol in order to get messages through.

#### 6.4. **Young people's alcohol misuse in Trafford**

6.5. In 2009 Trading Standards North West (TSNW) commissioned a regional study - Attitudes to alcohol among young people, to monitor and evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of 14-17 year olds towards alcohol. This study was first completed in 2005, and again in 2007, and covers the majority of local authorities in the North West region. Key findings for Trafford:

- Results indicate a small decline (-3%) in the percentage of 14-17 year olds in Trafford claiming to drink alcohol since 2007 (from 84% in 2005 to 81% in 2009).
- The percentage of 14-17 year olds claiming to drink alcohol once a week or more in Trafford (40%) is similar to the figures for the majority of other local authorities and the North West overall (38%).
- Trafford has one of the highest proportions of 14-17 year olds claiming to drink alcohol outside in comparison to other local authorities surveyed in the North West.
- Most 14-17 year olds in Trafford claim to get alcohol from their friends and relatives.
- The proportion of 14-17 year olds in Trafford who claim to buy their own alcohol has increased by 3% since 2007.

**6.6. The impact of parent or carer alcohol misuse on children and young people**

6.7. Research undertaken by Childline and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has identified that parental alcohol misuse is one of the key reasons why children who call Childline take on too much responsibility at too young an age. The impact of parental alcohol abuse on children and young people can include poor educational attainment, anxiety, depression and social isolation.

6.8. Keeping it in the Family: Growing up with Parents who Misuse Alcohol, a report published by Alcohol Concern in 2008 presents the following key findings for the UK:

- Alcohol Concern estimates up to 1 million children are affected by parental alcohol misuse, but that the problem remains largely hidden.
- The report asserts that the impulse to keep the alcohol problem hidden from public view can cause misery for children and other family members affected.
- That children living with alcohol dependent parents may not be in contact with health or social services until problems escalate and even then, the parental alcohol misuse is not always recorded, making it very difficult to know the full scale of the problem.
- That children affected by parental alcohol misuse can feel confused, lonely and isolated, often tending to see parental alcohol problems as in some way their fault and feeling guilty.
- That they can also often become “young carers” for the problem drinking parent, taking on the kinds of caring roles which would normally be expected of trained adults.
- That this can affect their education, peer relationships and family life, with many young carers dropping out of school altogether.
- That often children will take on responsibilities that are beyond their years and will keep their parent’s drinking a secret, increasing the risk of social exclusion.
- That they can also experience or witness physical, verbal and sexual abuse and neglect.

- That alcohol plays a part in around a quarter to a third of known cases of child abuse.

### 6.9. Parental responsibility

6.10. A National Survey of Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Behaviours among Young People was undertaken in April 2002 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The research identified behaviours in children's and young people's lives associated with an increased risk of problems at school, drug and alcohol misuse, and criminal behaviour. Other factors were found to protect them from difficulties, even when heavily exposed to risk. The factors are presented in the table below:

Influence on Child	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<b>Familial/parental</b>	Permissive parental attitude/behaviour towards alcohol  Poor/inconsistent parental control  Harsh parenting  Family conflict  Low bonding to family	Authoritative parenting style (both responsive and demanding)  A supportive family environment  Strong bonds/ attachment to parent(s)  Parent conventionality  An external support system which encourages the child's own coping efforts  Parental interest in, and support of, school activities
<b>Personal</b>	Genetic susceptibility  Sensation seeking/low harm avoidance  Early and persistent problem behaviours  Alienation and rebelliousness  Favourable attitude towards drug/alcohol use	Intolerance of deviance  Effective social problem solving skills  High levels of self-efficacy  Involvement in a hobby/pastime

	Early onset of drug/alcohol use	
<b>Peer</b>	Associating with drug/alcohol-using peers	Peer models for school achievement
<b>School</b>	Academic failure  Low levels of commitment to school  Peer rejection in early school years	Involvement with extra-curricular activities (Eccles and Barber, 1999)
<b>Environmental</b>	Laws and norms which encourage alcohol consumption Availability Extreme economic deprivation Neighbourhood disorganisation	

6.11. Trafford Parenting Strategy 2010 has identified an opportunity to develop training opportunities for new approaches and programmes which address gaps in services – for example training for short interventions with parents who have alcohol misuse problems. The Committee supports this initiative and recommends that this approach is built into initiatives for families with alcohol problems.

## 7. Our Approach

- 7.1. Bringing people together to identify the solutions that they want and that work for them; the review was grounded in the perspectives of local people and representatives from local organisations. Young people, their teachers and carers, and those with direct, personal experience of the impact of alcohol harm participated in the review, offering their perspectives. In particular, their views were gathered on their experiences of support and intervention in Trafford, where they felt gaps existed and where improvements could be made.
- 7.2. Linking the review with provider and partner initiatives has been central to the review, which was focused on aligning with the priorities of the Every Child Matters Trafford, Hidden Harm Strategy 2008 and Trafford Parenting Strategy 2010, and making recommendations which support and enhance the action plan.

### 7.3. **Community engagement and information gathering**

- 7.4. A youth forum was held on 11 January 2010 by the Trafford Children in Care Council and Trafford Youth Cabinet, who hosted a debate with young people from across the Borough about the most effective ways to help young people in Trafford, their peers and their families or care givers manage their relationship with alcohol within legal and safe recommended levels.

“It was really good seeing other young people taking the time to sit and listen to each others views on the problems relating to alcohol.”  
Reiner Tarry, youth forum participant

- 7.5. The Forum provided an open and confidential space for a group of young people to explore their experiences with alcohol and to understand the factors which shape their relationship with it.

“I really enjoyed chairing the Youth Forum Debate, The other young people where lovely to speak to and very enthusiastic about reducing Trafford's underage drinking rate. I hope in the future more events like this will take place in and around Trafford.” Nicola Abbott

- 7.6. Young people offered their perspectives on where they feel gaps exist in reducing the hidden harm of alcohol and where improvements could be made.

“It was really great to hear young people swapping ideas and airing their views, it was a great success.” Cllr S. Adshead, Select Committee Member

- 7.7. A questionnaire was disseminated to all schools in the Borough which asked schools about the services in place to address young people who drink or who are at risk of harm because they live in an alcohol misusing family or caring environment.

### 7.8. **Commissioners and providers**

- 7.9. The Committee sought the views of, and talked to providers, commissioners and government agencies in Trafford including schools, Trafford Primary Care Trust Trafford Council Children and Young People's and Adult Social Services, the Police, Public Protection and Public Health professionals and the Safer Trafford Partnership.

- 7.10. The Committee sought the views of voluntary sector organisations including Action for Children, Caring for Carers

- 7.11. A full list of statutory, community and voluntary sector organisations we sought the views of for the review may be found in **Appendix 1**.

## Recommendations

As a result of gathering evidence in support of the recommendations, five distinct themes have emerged:

- Providing 'signposting' and information
- Tackling access to alcohol by young people
- Assisting young people and their families to access help and support
- Informing Members about how they can help young people and families access support and tackle access to alcohol in their communities

### Recommendation 1: Providing 'signposting' and information

**The Committee found that there is little supportive information in communities for young people in Trafford specifically about alcohol concerns.**

#### **Trafford young people and communities told us:**

Young people who experience problems with their own or someone else's drinking told us that they would speak to the Youth Services team or a school nurse in the first instance, but would welcome a similar resource to the 'Talk to Frank' initiative about drugs, focused on alcohol.

Young people requested better education, both balanced and hard hitting, to ensure that they are given all the facts, in order for them to make an informed decision about their drinking.

Young people told us that they were aware of current publicity campaigns around both alcohol and sexual health but that the campaigns had little impact, requesting peer mentoring schemes to help with problem drinking by them, their peers, family or carers.

#### **Trafford Partners told us:**

An Alcohol Action Plan is in place and is taking a 'whole family' approach to cases of alcohol misuse. It is, however, critical that contracted providers of alcohol services supply information about service users with children to enable a risk assessment to take place.

The key themes which emerged from our questionnaire were that teachers used a variety of services to obtain information ranging from the school nurse, In-Volve, Healthy Schools Co-ordinator, to Social Services and the Multi Agency Referral and Assessment Team (MARAT).

However, a number of schools still requested more guidance on how to obtain information and training in order for them to effectively signpost young people to services and how to support them in schools.

A theatre production is available, which visits schools and community centres and is acted out by young people, tells the story of a small group whose social lives are dominated by alcohol. It also explores the reasons why they are drinking and engaging in risky behaviour. After the production is shown to young people, the cast run workshops to discuss the issues raised in the performance and the production is used in many schools as an ongoing piece of work on alcohol education. The production provides an effective means for beginning a dialogue with young people about alcohol.

'The play is very well thought out and the situations acted out in it are chillingly realistic.' Councillor S. Adshead, Select Committee Member.

### **In conclusion:**

Partners have the opportunity to jointly commission high impact education and publicity campaigns for young people, which are presented by their peers to help them learn about the risks of drinking alcohol.

From the evidence gathered for the review, both teachers and pastoral assistants told us that services need to be signposted more effectively, in a format specifically designed for young people and tailored to suit the age of their target audience.

Partners told us that young people are more likely to consult posters in schools, confidential telephone help lines and advertising on social networking websites about issues of concern to them. Whilst the use of social networking websites is a radical change from the traditional methods of communication, it would assist in getting the right messages to young people.

**Based on the evidence the Committee has considered, its recommendations about providing signposting and information are as follows:**

- a) To develop a resource pack and training for staff in all schools to enable them to support a child or young person who is impacted on by alcohol abuse either directly or indirectly by their parent, carer or relative.
- b) To create web-based information resources which are accessible to all young people to educate and signpost them to find support in Trafford and elsewhere specifically about problem drinking by the

young person, their parent, carer or relative, supported by a poster campaign to be distributed to Trafford schools.

- c) That the Dramatically Healthy production, 'Mine's a Pint' be promoted to head teachers with a view to using the production as an innovative method of educating young people about the effects of alcohol.

## **Recommendation 2: Tackling access to alcohol by young people**

**The Committee found that Trafford's young people under the age of 18 have no trouble accessing alcohol if they want to**

### **Trafford young people and communities told us:**

Young people consider that alcohol is readily available to them and they can obtain it easily from smaller, independent shops and by passing as over eighteen in bars and clubs.

They consider that raising the minimum age of purchase would not address the availability issue, as many obtained alcohol by other means. Young people do not consider that raising the price of alcohol would dissuade them from obtaining alcohol, because they assert that they would find the resources to meet the increased cost of higher prices.

Schools in the Borough have been developing innovative methods for helping young people understand the risks of alcohol which have met with approval from students. Teachers in one school told us that they invited a recovering alcoholic contacted through Alcoholics Anonymous to speak with year 10 and 11 students to explicitly highlight the dangers of alcohol. One teacher noted, 'we aren't alcohol specialists, ex-alcoholics are'.

### **Trafford Partners told us:**

Children and young people accessing alcohol from home is a major issue, which is difficult to measure, due to difficulty of obtaining proof. Anecdotally, this issue is considered to be more of a problem than proxy sales and sales to under-18s.

The Committee was also informed that young people accessing alcohol from home are probably living in alcohol misusing households, but that this assumption is not easily proven. Peer pressure, however, is often the overriding factor in young people's choosing to take alcohol.

The Committee notes that inconsistencies across the Borough in relation to the reporting of young people caught drunk in public places or in possession of alcohol, have been successfully resolved as a result of the



creation of an alcohol related anti-social behaviour database, which has improved the sharing of information between the Police and Trafford Council.

A Partnership approach to tackling young people found, or suspected to have taken alcohol, is in place which begins with a series of warnings then meetings with parents if their child is caught in possession of alcohol.

A procedure is also in place, coordinated by the GMP Anti Social Behaviour Officer Coordinator based in the Offender Management Unit at Stretford Police Station to ensure that interventions can be applied consistently across the Borough.

Public Protection officers undertake a range of interventions to prevent proxy and underage sales in the Borough. New volunteers are being recruited in the area of underage sales. There is an opportunity to share information more effectively between Greater Manchester Police and the Public Protection Team.

There is an opportunity for the public to become more involved in licensing reviews, however the Public Protection team would be unable to facilitate greater public involvement owing to the risk of perceptions of predetermination of licensing applications. Helping the public to be better informed about their rights, under the Licensing Act 2003, is also a challenge.

**In conclusion:**

Young people in Trafford have told us that they can obtain alcohol in a number of ways and a there is an opportunity to build on the strong Partnership approach and ensure the penalties and checks on young people accessing alcohol are utilised widely and publicised.

**Based on the evidence the Committee has considered, its recommendations about tackling access to alcohol by young people are as follows:**

- e) To publicise more widely and more innovatively the potential penalties of adults buying alcohol for those under the legal age limit.
- f) To develop new methods or strengthen existing ones to tackle the under age sale of alcohol from smaller off licences in the Borough.
- g) That Trafford Council IT, Communications and the Licensing department work collaboratively to explore methods for assisting the public contact the licensing section more efficiently, to explore

the use of a hotline and to update the Licensing section's webpage to be more customer focused.

- h) That communication is made to all premises licensed for the 'on sale' of alcohol in the Borough to request them to promote the sale of alcohol free beer and wine.

### **Recommendation 3: Assisting young people and their families to access help and support**

**The Committee found that a good deal of innovative support is available in some areas of the Borough and that there is an opportunity to make sure that all young people and their families and carers have access to the same level of support**

#### **Trafford young people and communities told us:**

Young people consider that alcohol is part of the culture and that drinking is normal; they know of few examples of adults who did not drink alcohol, except in families where alcohol is prohibited for cultural or religious reasons where young people were less likely to drink.

Young people worried about their own, or someone else's, drinking requested access to local support, separately from Adult Social Services. Improved transport was requested in some areas so that services which are available can be accessed by all young people in the Borough.

#### **Trafford Partners told us:**

Schools, teachers and teaching assistants are an essential part of the educational, social and emotional experience for children and young people. Both primary and secondary school teachers specifically noted that there is a fear amongst parents that their children will be removed from their care as a result of being open to schools about an alcohol problem. As a result, children become complicit in the alcohol misusing environment and parents are often reluctant to disclose a problem to teachers. A key aspect of alcohol misusing families, where neglect and child protection issues are a feature, is frequent changes of schools; with families sometimes moving to other authorities before the problem becomes known. This factor may be a marker for escalating problems in the family.

Alcohol misuse is both a symptom and a cause of problems in families. The negative impact on children of alcoholic parents is considerable, with young people's lives being put on hold in an alcohol dependent relationship with a parent or carer.

Collusion and secrecy are critical and the young person in an alcohol misusing family operates in a co-dependent relationship, where they become

the protector of the alcohol misusing adult. In addition, the alcohol misusing environment becomes normalised for the young person involved, who may not be aware that they can expect an alternative. Domestic violence is a routine feature of the circumstances the families face. In some cases older children buy alcohol and give it to the younger ones.

When the families of young people with alcohol dependent parents receive external help, problems often occur as their control is removed, there is still a high risk for the young person at this time and additional support is required.

A stable school environment and the provision of after school activities is considered beneficial for a young person in counteracting the chaos of living in an alcohol misusing family environment.

Children in Need meetings; social services reviews; direct disclosure; witnessing parents under the influence; and, intelligence received from staff living locally are all ways in which schools find out that the child or young person lives in an alcohol misusing environment.

Schools have requested more guidance and sign-posting when a parent or carer presents with signs of alcohol misuse. One role for the schools is to ensure the continuity of routine for the young people in an often challenging and changing family situation. Teaching Assistants are critical for vulnerable children and can represent another adult 'parent figure' who may work closely with the children and build trust. After school clubs and activities offer vital support for vulnerable children.

Whilst one school which contributed to the review has good access to counselling services, another said that counselling is 'very limited in Trafford and this would really help the schools'.

'It's about knowing what agencies do exist; where do we go; where do we direct people?' A Trafford Head Teacher

### **In conclusion:**

A number of innovative arrangements have been noted, including parents being brought into schools to assist with after-school clubs, with the effect of increasing their confidence and also adding to the number of role models for children within the school. Another innovation, by one school the Committee talked to, is the organisation of a Credit-Union, financed by the local Housing Trust and managed by volunteers in the school, with the aim of tackling the circle of debt and low expectations which can result in alcohol dependency running throughout generations.

The Committee found out that budgets for drug treatment services are ring-fenced by law, resulting in a lack of flexibility in delivering education initiatives and commissioning services. If there was a joint substance misuse pot, then

budgets could go further in delivering services for those experiencing drug and/or alcohol dependency.

The Senior Commissioner for the Safer Trafford Partnership informed Members that alcohol services in Trafford were being reviewed due to the inadequacy of previous provision. Current interim services include an out-patient detoxification service run primarily by substance misuse nurses in conjunction with GPs, as well as an in-patient service, for those with more complex needs. Complementing this is a substance misuse service run from Trafford General, aimed at referring those who present at A&E with alcohol related injuries or symptoms onto other health agencies

Various initiatives are funded in the area, however, the funding is often time limited with initiatives often not being funded for more than a year or two; “people get used to faces appearing, promising change and then disappearing, leaving distrust in authority and its capacity to effect change in communities.”

**Based on the evidence the Committee has considered, its recommendations about helping young people and their families to access help and support are as follows:**

- g) That the Children and Young People’s Service undertakes a review of access to counselling services for children and young people.
- h) That consideration is given, when a new Alcohol Service is commissioned, to the importance of alcohol workers and their significance in supporting relatives of those with alcohol dependency.
- i) To ensure, at the earliest opportunity, that referral forms for children and young people to access Trafford Young Carers are available at the Talkshop (Sale Waterside) and in schools.
- j) That training is offered to carers directly in order to equip them with the skills and information they need to support the people they care for.
- k) That the new Alcohol Service links with Trafford’s Parenting Strategy and takes account of the research into risk and protective factors for problem behaviours among young people undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- l) That formal communication is made to the appropriate Minister, by the most appropriate means, to make him/her aware of the disadvantages of ring fencing budgets for tackling drug misuse.

## **Recommendation 4: Informing Members**

**The Committee found that there is an opportunity for Members to take an active role in licensing applications, variations or reviews under the amendments to the Licensing Act 2003 and for Members to gain a greater understanding of safeguarding**

### **Trafford young people and communities told us:**

There are opportunities for increasing policing in the area and dealing with the specific problems of young people, alcohol and crime, which are connected to problem retail outlets.

### **Trafford Partners told us:**

Trafford's Licensing Forum includes the police, public protection, drug and alcohol action team and anti social behaviour officers. The Forum focuses on exchanging intelligence and best practice between partner agencies. In addition, the team work as part of a trading standards North West group which exchanges information and best practice at a regional level.

An opportunity exists to promote child protection training to Members to enable them to understand the complexities/risk associated with safeguarding.

### **In conclusion:**

Councillors, members of the public and partners play an important role reporting instances of proxy and underage sales.

The Licensing Act 2003 has been amended to give Councillors the opportunity to act as 'interested parties', giving them the opportunity to submit representations in respect of an application, variation or review of a premises licence which help tackle problems such as underage and proxy sales.

Trafford Council Public Protection directorate have, as a result of the amendments to the Act, organised training for all Members to receive information on their role as an interested party. However, there has been little interest in attending the sessions and Licensing would welcome the attendance of Members to receive basic training on their new role.

The Select Committee wish to encourage all Members to attend this training. There is still a further opportunity, as noted by public protection and the Police, by raising awareness within communities about the powers they have under the Licensing Act 2003. The Committee was informed that Licensing cannot directly assist in raising awareness as it could compromise their

objectivity, there is an opportunity to do this through other means.

Members of the Select Committee have noted that an opportunity exists to promote the methods of contacting the licensing section and further investigation into the Council's website has shown that it is not as customer focussed as it might be.

Blackburn with Darwen Council undertakes proxy sales operations when intelligence has been received, regarding certain premises in the area. Their trading standards officers have taken the innovative step of placing their officers in premises (in cooperation with the retailer) posing as shop workers stacking shelves.

The publicity generated from these operations has led to increased awareness within the area that it is an offence to purchase alcohol for an under 18 year old.

It is noted that Trading Standards are considering the newly published guidance on innovative test purchasing methods as part of the North West Trading Standards group subject to resources.

**Based on the evidence the Committee has considered, its recommendations about informing Members are as follows:**

- c) That safeguarding training is offered to all Members.
- d) That all Members are made aware of their role as an interested party and offered training on their responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003.

## **2. Conclusion**

- 2.1. A lot of innovative work is being undertaken in the area of tackling the hidden harm of alcohol and its impact on young people, families and carers in Trafford.
- 2.2. Assessing the level of need for the purpose of the review has presented an opportunity to bring together information and evidence to understand the effectiveness of the range of initiatives in the area of intervention to address hidden harm and how support is provided and accessed in Trafford.
- 2.3. There are significant opportunities for Members to take a role in licensing applications, variations and reviews.

- 2.4. There is a significant opportunity for Trafford Partners to further develop the strategic whole family approach to the impact of alcohol harm; in particular, building on the strong start in the area of sharing information about proxy and underage sales and young people found to be at risk.
- 2.5. There is an opportunity for Public Protection and Licensing service to be assisted in promoting penalties for proxy sales and sales to minors.
- 2.6. There is also an opportunity for putting information, resources, activities and opportunities for tackling hidden harm in the right place and in the right formats.
- 2.7. The recommendations build on the excellent innovations partners are developing are viewed through the lens of Trafford communities. The recommendations are designed to ensure that initiatives continue to put residents and employees at the centre of provision, with the aim that these initiatives continue to be designed from the perspective of the individual, not the organisation.
- 2.8. The Committee would like to thank the Trafford Centre for the gift of vouchers for a prize for the Youth Forum.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Action for Children
Broad oak School
Broomwood Primary School
Caring for Carers
Egerton High School
Flixton Girls' School
Streetbase Gorse Hill
Partington Youth Centre
Trafford Children in Care Council
Trafford Youth Cabinet
Greater Manchester Police

Moss Park Junior School
Navigation Primary School
Safer Trafford Partnership
Trafford Council Children and Young People's Service
Trafford Council Communities and Wellbeing Directorate
Trafford Council Public Protection
Trafford Primary Care Trust
Urmston Junior School
Wellacre Technology College
Worthington Primary School

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**Report Ends**