



Alcohol in the System: Report

An examination of alcohol and youth offending in London

“Alcohol doesn’t make you aware of your actions, you become aggressive” (WP #3)

“Drink makes them act in bad ways do things they are not supposed to; fights, stabbings, they can’t handle alcohol; they think they can but they can’t” (CP #2)

“Only use criminal justice as a last resort, worry about people who have convictions” (WP #1)

“All of my arrests were connected to drinking alcohol at least 9 separate occasions. I guess it either gave me false confidence or made me do stupid things cos I wasn’t thinking straight” (CP #9)

“It’s not about excusing what we’ve done [crime] it’s about understanding why we’re doing it, this seems like a chance to get proper help” (CP#6)

41% of young offenders report that they had been drinking at the time of their offence

(The Prisoner Crime Reduction survey Oct 2014)

About us

Alcohol Concern is a small independent charity. We work throughout England and Wales towards our vision of a world where alcohol does no harm. We help people through information, advice and guidance; help professionals through training, projects and research; and help all of us through campaigning to challenge the drinking culture in our country.

More information about our work is on our website www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

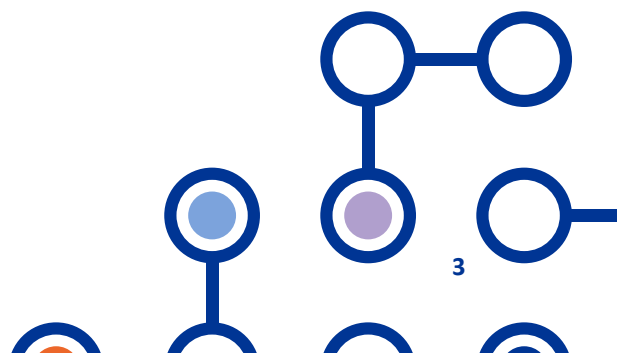
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Contents:

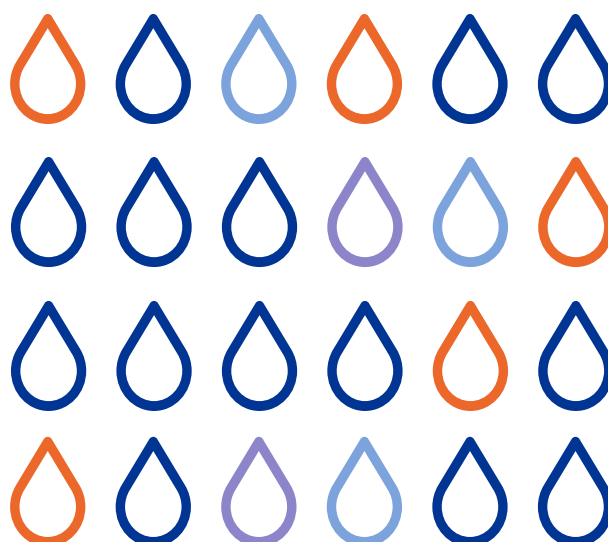


Acknowledgements	Page 4
Executive summary	Page 4
Project recommendations	Page 5
Introduction	Page 6
Background	Page 7
Methodology	Page 11
Key findings	Page 12
Realising the Vision	Page 16
Event	Page 21
Appendices	Page 22
Report references	Page 22



1. Acknowledgements

“Alcohol in the system” was funded by the Trust for London, a charitable organisation that exists to reduce poverty and inequality in London. They do this by funding the voluntary and community sector and others, as well as by using their own expertise and knowledge to support work that tackles poverty and its root causes. We would also like to thank New Horizons youth centre, Enfield Christian housing Action; (Edmonton Foyer), the Salmon Youth Centre and all the young people brave enough to take part.



2. Executive summary

- 1 Young people have grown up surrounded by a culture of drinking and binge drinking in the UK, however their access to alcohol information and support is patchy.
- 2 Young people who drink alcohol are especially vulnerable to the effects of alcohol and are more likely to end up in dangerous and confrontational situations.
- 3 The links between excessive alcohol consumption and violence affecting young people are well established.
- 4 Up to 41% of young offenders had drunk alcohol at the time of their offence.
- 5 A high number of young people cited that ‘drinking less’ would stop them reoffending.
- 6 Criminal records acquired in childhood can have a long term detrimental impact on the lives of many young people, worsening their prospects and outcomes.
- 7 Current screening and assessment for alcohol use amongst young people is patchy, opportunities are being missed.
- 8 Alternative options to the criminal justice system, such as recognising alcohol misuse as a public health issue, are required for young people who carry out criminal acts while under the influence of alcohol.
- 9 Actively involving young people in the design and delivery of services is an effective way of meeting needs and building their capacity to become active citizens

3. Project recommendations

Our findings highlight that alcohol needs to be made a greater priority with regard to risky behaviours amongst young people. Alcohol misuse must be seen and treated as a public health issue, rather than purely a criminal justice issue. Young people must have opportunities to learn about the risks associated with alcohol misuse and more health and social options made available to young people who misuse alcohol, keeping them outside of the criminal justice system and improving their life chances. We encourage public health leads to take this forward.

More detailed recommendations are as follows:

Prevention and building resilience

- 1 All youth workers, school nurses and teachers with pastoral support roles to be trained to deliver Identification and Brief Advice (IBA).
- 2 In addition, all practitioners involved with assessments or “diversionary work” need a ‘level’ of competency in being able to talk about alcohol with young people.
- 3 Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) should be made statutory in schools, incorporating peer education and specifically addressing alcohol. Teachers or other educators/ counsellors trained with competency to discuss and deliver alcohol education in schools, using evidence-based approaches.
- 4 Increased funding and recognition to value the important role of diversionary and positive engagement activities using youth work processes.

Identifying risk and needs, and offering support with health and social interventions

- 5 More effective and vigorous screening for alcohol in all assessments with young people when they get ‘into trouble’.
- 6 Utilise the NHS England’s’ commissioned Liaison and Diversion trial site to screen for problematic alcohol use in custody suites and refer to appropriate support.
- 7 Pilot a Peer Court in London based on the Hampshire model for low level offences, including alcohol related offences.
- 8 Refer young people to a recognised “6-week programme” incorporating peer education to address problematic alcohol use.

Tracking Progress

- 9 Annual accurate recording of alcohol related offences amongst young people, under 24 years, in London.
- 10 Create a forum or delegate responsibility for on-going involvement of young people reviewing alcohol and young people entering the Criminal Justice System and the effectiveness of alternatives, and offer opportunities for young offenders within this.

4. Introduction

“Alcohol in the system” was funded by the Trust for London to develop a 12 month project exploring the link between alcohol consumption amongst young people and youth offending. (<http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk>)

The overall aim was to engage young people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and alcohol to inform our Campaign. Young offenders are a marginalised and vulnerable cohort, rarely afforded the chance of informing decision-makers.

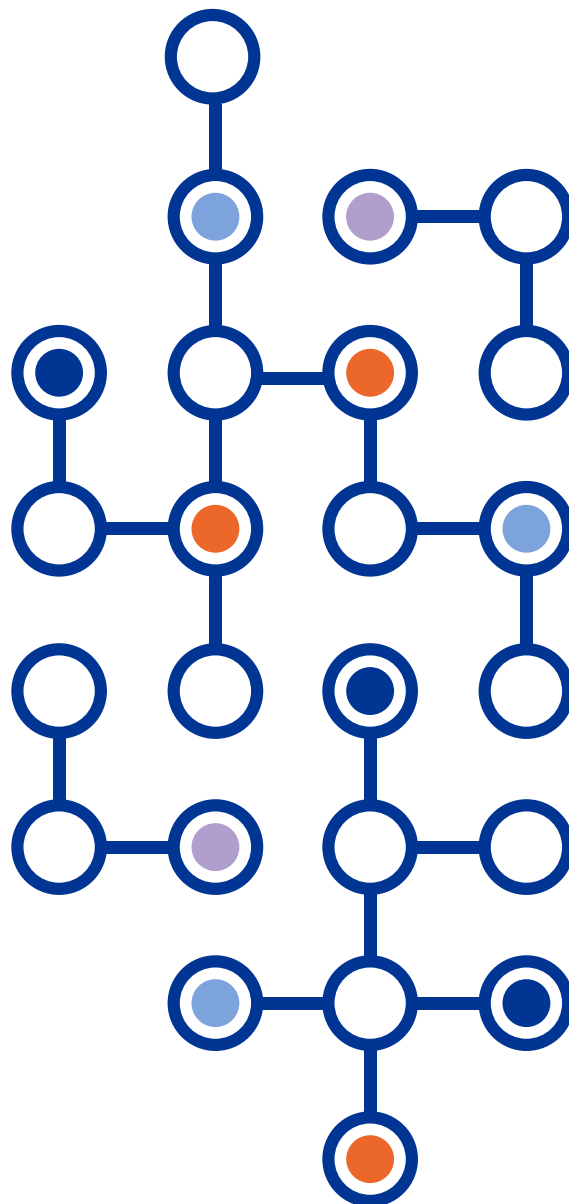
The consumption of alcohol increases their vulnerabilities.

This project aimed to place young people known to the criminal justice system and who had drunk alcohol at the heart of the project.

The project lead drew upon his considerable youth participation experience to engage and involve young people in co-producing the project. We wanted to build their capacity and support them to find a strong and collective voice and make recommendations directly to policy and decision-makers, drawing upon their own experiences. We provided opportunities of developing skills, gaining experience and leaving a legacy for their peers; **fewer young people in the criminal justice system**

Alcohol Concern has good experience of working with young people and has developed a number of youth projects under its banner It’s the Drink Talking (ITDT), working directly with young people and partners. ITDT partners work with young people; exploring how different alcohol issues affect their lives and local communities, and together they come up with exciting, innovative ways for young people to make positive change happen. One of our projects the Youth Alcohol Advertising Council (YAAC) has received praise and awards for their role in holding the self-regulated alcohol marketing to account.

Directly engaging the ‘core group’ in this project proved to be a very challenging process.



5. Background

Alcohol Concern teamed up with the charity Mentor in 2013 to research this issue by assessing on-line data from London Youth Offending Service teams. The report, *Demon Drink*ⁱⁱ indicated that there was a link (between alcohol and youth offending) and the young peoples' personal testimonies revealed that they felt alcohol led to poor decision-making and behaviours likely to lead them to entering the criminal justice system. They also felt that opportunities were missed to talk to them and address their alcohol use.

5.1 Alcohol

In the UK drinking alcohol is embedded into many aspects of people's lives. It is therefore unsurprising that many young people who have grown up surrounded by a culture of drinking go on to 'drink'. Adolescence has often thrown challenges to teenagers in their transition to early adulthood. Young people often cite coping with stress and negative feelings (to forget their problems) as a key reason to drink or use alcohol.ⁱⁱⁱ

The internet and social media platforms can often mean that those pressures of conformity, exams, peer pressure, sexuality, fashion, personal identity and belonging are felt more keenly and detrimentally by teenagers today.

In the UK the legal minimum age to buy alcohol is 18, however young people aged 16 or 17 can consume beer, wine or cider with a meal on licensed premises, if accompanied by an adultⁱ. Children who drink increase their risks of involvement in a wide range of health and social problems. Consequently the UK Chief Medical Officers advise that an alcohol free childhood is the healthiest and best option, however; if children do drink this should not be until they are at least 15 and always with the guidance of a parent or carer in a supervised environment.

While latest figures show under 18's are less likely to consume alcohol than adults^{iv}, there are still significant sectors within the population where alcohol is a contributing factor to harmful and negative life consequences. According to the latest reports released by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, 22% of pupils who had drunk in the last week had consumed 15 units of alcohol or more. Alcohol consumption in young people also exhibits differences in terms of region and ethnicity.

Evidence from the "What about youth" survey (2014) suggests that fewer young people are drinking alcohol than they did in the past. However, despite recent declines, the proportion of children in the UK drinking alcohol remains well above the European average and the majority of 17 year olds do drink alcohol.

British children are more likely to binge drink or get drunk compared to children in most other European countries.

The availability of the **WAY 2014** data at local authority level enables local authorities to identify the size and characteristics of their at-risk population and to tailor appropriate interventions. For example, both the consumption and harm data suggest there may be a need to intervene with girls slightly earlier than with boys. Alcohol use can be linked to other risk taking behaviour therefore young people are likely to benefit from integrated wellbeing services. The strong interaction with smoking also suggests that joint action tackling both behaviours would be beneficial. This may also help to reduce health inequalities as alcohol harms and smoking prevalence are more likely to occur in more deprived areas. Professionals from health, education, social care and youth justice agencies need to be able to identify, assess and, where necessary, appropriately refer young people experiencing alcohol-related problems.^v

5.2 Youth Offending

Young offenders can include both juvenile offenders, young people under the age of 18, and young adult offenders, anyone aged between 18 and 20^{vi}. The latest figures show that progress is being made in the youth justice system with a downward trend in the number of young people entering the system and the number of those receiving custodial sentences. In England and Wales, in the year ending March 2015, 30,960 people aged 10-17 were sentenced with 1,834 in this age group receiving an immediate custodial sentence^{vii} compared to 2,260 in 2014.

Conversely a report by the Ministry of Justice on Youth Justice Interventions found this progress was accompanied by extremely high levels of re-offending. Within a year, up to 75% of young people released from custody and 68% of young people on community sentences reoffend. It is estimated that an extremely low number of offenders (5%) are responsible for nearly a third of all youth crime^{viii}. Furthermore, the average cost of placing young offenders in custody can be as much as £ 212,000 per annum, for a place in a secure children's home, with repeat offenders being seen time and time again^x.

Overall young people were convicted of 87,160 proven offences (those resulting in a caution or conviction) in the year ending March 2015^{xi}.

The Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ), a membership organisation in the UK which campaigns for a better youth justice system, recently released a report highlighting the punitive nature of criminal records for young people in the UK.

"A child in England and Wales is not only more likely to acquire a criminal record, but this will affect them for longer and more profoundly, than in any of the countries reviewed" Penelope Gibbs, Chair of SCYJ^{xii}.

Compared with a number of other countries, the youth justice system in England and Wales is particularly punitive. The way in which childhood criminal records are recorded, stored and disclosed can have a huge, long term, impact on the lives of young people, limiting their life outcomes. In

England and Wales, criminal record checks are common-place when applying for a job, meaning that a minor offence committed during childhood can have a huge impact on a person's future. This is in stark contrast to Spain, for example, where criminal record checks are rarely carried out by employers. In England and Wales, all criminal records acquired in childhood (defined as those under 18 years old) are treated the same as those acquired by adults, with no capacity for childhood records to be sealed or expunged. Alternatively, countries such as Germany, Spain, Canada, Sweden, Ireland, Scotland and Italy all have systems in place which mean childhood records can be destroyed, if they meet the requirements of the specific jurisdiction. The SCYJ, advocates for a changes which distinguish between child and adult records and has called on the Government to make changes to law and policy in the area of childhood criminal records^{xiii}.

5.3 Alcohol and Youth Offending

"Criminality and alcohol abuse tend to run in parallel, as both have their peak incidence in young adults and tend to diminish with age"^{xiv}

Alcohol is recognised as a **key driver of crime** in the "Modern Crime Prevention Strategy" (Home Office 2016).

Alcohol consumption is known to affect cognitive and physical function. While for many of us this drug can be consumed in moderation and accompanied by responsible law abiding behaviour for others consumption of alcohol can be extremely detrimental and have negative life consequences. The links between alcohol and violence affecting young people are well established with the World Health Organisation estimating that globally alcohol is estimated to be responsible for **26%** and **16%** of lives lost through homicide by males and females respectively.^{xv}

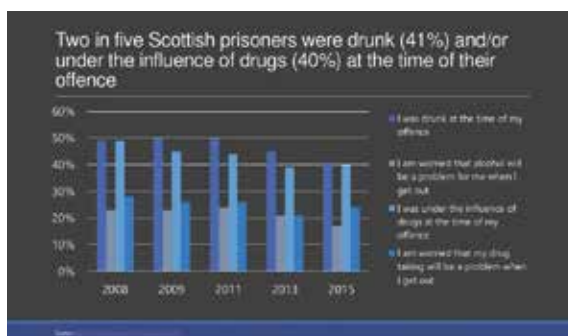
A number of studies and reports have carried out interviews with young offenders whereby alcohol was identified as a major contributing factor to violence and crime. A report by Batchelor (2005),

which drew on research, interviewing young women aged 16-24 in HMPYOI Cornton Vale in Scotland, found that four-fifths of women interviewed experienced problems associated with their own alcohol consumption, with half admitting to drinking till they blacked out. Furthermore, a high proportion of women witnessed physical violence in their home which was perpetrated under the influence of alcohol. Specifically relating to 17 year old girls in the secure estate, 86% of respondents stated they had drunk alcohol prior to imprisonment, with 61% drinking over the recommended guidelines^{xvii}.

A home office study in 2003 (Richardson and Budd, 2003) suggested that among a slightly older age group of 18-24 year olds, binge drinking, is statistically related to offending behaviour". A study by (Stallard, Thomason & Churchyard 2003) reported that **70%** of young offenders were found to be drinking alcohol frequently, with **20%** stating they consumed more than 10 drinks on each occasion.^{xviii}

The largest proportion of proven offences in the year ending March 2015 were violence against the person, which also increased the most compared with March 2010 (by 4 percentage points) and now make up 24% of total offences over this period.^{xix}

A survey of Scottish prisoners demonstrated that **41%** were drunk at time of their offence.



It is estimated that alcohol related crime costs the UK £7.3 billion per annum in terms of policing, prevention services, processing offenders through the criminal justice system and human costs incurred by the victims of crime. Overall alcohol-related harm costs the UK around £20 billion per year with alcohol-related crime accounting for the single largest area of expenditure.^{xx}

Victims believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol in over half (53%) of all violent incidents, or 704,000 offences^{xxi}.

The Prisoner Crime Reduction survey found that young people (**41%**) were more likely to state that their offending was 'a lot' or 'always' linked with alcohol consumption compared to older prisoners (30%), with **47%** of young adults citing that drinking less will stop them re-offending.

Ben Gummer (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health) responding to a question from Labour MP for Middlesbrough) stated in the House of Commons in July 2016: "Research shows that around three quarters of people in contact with the criminal justice system in the UK have a problem with alcohol"^{xxii}

The **Mckinley report** (2009) found that most (80.5%) of Young Offenders who had used a weapon to injure someone in the 2007 survey stated that they were under the influence of alcohol at the time. Accounts by interviewed Young Offenders implied that alcohol use was a factor in turning weapon owners into weapon carriers and weapon carriers into weapon users.^{xxiii}

In a study into alcohol harm and youth offending, AUDIT was used to assess alcohol use disorders amongst young people in the criminal justice system. Although the study was in the North East of England we feel the results are still relevant. **81%** of the young offenders were identified as experiencing alcohol-related health risk or harm and **77%** scored within a possibly alcohol-dependent range. The authors have called for changes to be made to the care pathways in place in the UK for young people coming through the Criminal Justice System with alcohol-related issues.^{xxiv}

High rates of alcohol consumption are frequently found among adolescents within the criminal justice system, a study of 16-20-year-olds in the prison system in England and Wales reported that **62%** of males and **13%** of females on remand and **70%** of males and **51%** of females of those sentenced experienced an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD).^{xxv}

5.4 Treatment

Community orders including the Alcohol Treatment Requirement (ATR) were introduced as a sentencing option in 2005; however, ATR is only available for those over 18 years old^{xxvi}. For offenders under the age of 18, Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YROs) were introduced into the youth justice system in 2008 and act as a generic community sentence.

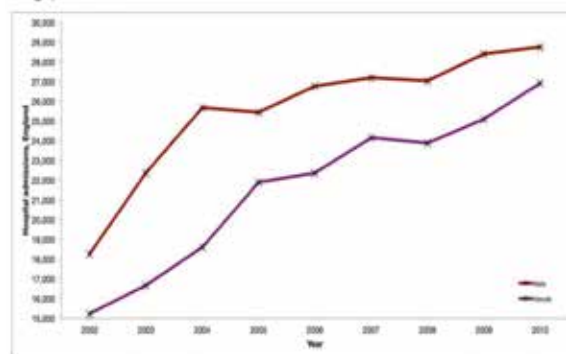
Specifically relating to alcohol misuse, an Intoxicating Substance Treatment Requirement can be attached to a YRO, meaning the young person must submit to treatment for the period specified. This type of YRO will only be issued if the young person has expressed willingness to comply. In 2013/14, 12,123 YROs were issued to 8,507 young people, with 18,031 requirements attached to them. However, of these requirements only 22 were recorded as being issued for Intoxicating Substance Treatment. It should be noted, though that for just over 40 % of requirements no requirement type data was recorded.

Alcohol is the next biggest problem substance (after cannabis) with just over half the young people (under 18) in treatment (**51%**) seeking help for its misuse during 2014-15. The most common route into specialist services is via the youth justice system (29%), with youth offending teams the single largest source (26%)^{xxvii}

Public Health England and the NHS state that “young people require psychosocial, harm reduction and family interventions, rather than treatment for addiction, which most adults but only a small minority of young people require. Most young people need to engage with specialist drug and alcohol interventions for a short period of time, often weeks, before continuing with further support elsewhere, within an integrated young people’s care plan.”^{xxviii}

The number of **hospital admissions**, relating to young people and alcohol is alarming. Admissions of 15 to 24 year-old male patients increased by **57%**, from 18,265 in 2002 to 28,747 in 2010. The number of admissions of 15 to 24 year-old female patients over the period increased at faster rate [**76%**], from 15,233 in 2002 to 26,908 in 2010.^{xxix}

Figure 6: Number of alcohol-related hospital admissions in England, 15 to 24 years of age, 2002–2010



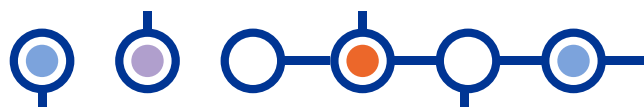
Source: North West Public Health Observatory (NWPHO)

A 2010 report by the Care Quality Commission in Wales carried out a report on youth alcohol misuse and offending. It found that while good progress was being made toward alcohol related needs in children by most youth offending teams there were too many inconsistencies across England and Wales. This meant that alcohol related needs are not identified, and consequently the appropriate interventions were not undertaken. Further the recording, reporting and sharing of successful interventions was shown to be inconsistent, making assessment of both positive and negative interventions difficult. One highlighted area for improvement and of particular importance is the continuity of alcohol misuse treatment when moving from the youth to the adult system. It was highlighted that improvements could help those involved with the YJS from becoming involved with the justice system as adults, benefiting both themselves and wider society^{xxx}.

The report into the experiences of young people stated that

“participants felt there was a lack of credible ‘community’ alcohol services available to younger males, in comparison to what was available within the young offenders institute, even from those interviewed who had previously undergone some level of intervention while in the community.”

6. Methodology



The young people (15-21yrs) who informed the project had entered the criminal justice system and used alcohol. Inevitably, it was a real challenge to locate and engage a marginalised and vulnerable cohort. Although experienced with working within this group, the project lead was reliant on referrals or access to young people through third party organisations.

We met and engaged with a range of professionals and practitioners across the sectors, engaging in discussion about supporting young people to stay outside of the criminal justice system.

We also wanted to hear the experiences and views of a wider cross-section of young people across London. We have used some direct quotes for either our Core Participants (CP #x) or from the wider consultation (WC #x)

During this wider consultation, the young people (11-19yrs) we spoke to felt that other young people were binge drinking every weekend, getting into risky and confrontational situations.

Those who drank, admitted alcohol

“messed with their minds, made them do stupid things, make stupid decisions, get them into trouble.”

We consulted with young people at a wide range of venues as we presented the campaign and sought to engage young people with the project. Some young people took part in focus group discussions, all completed a short questionnaire. There were high levels of empathy and concern for young people who got into trouble because of alcohol.

We wanted to hear the views and experiences of other young people; these became our “wider participants”. We held an event for 40 young people in Hackney on 2nd August.

However, it is vital to find ways of actively involving the young people most affected by these issues to learn from their experiences and make

recommendations based on that. Co-production is an effective way of empowering vulnerable or marginalised young people, to have a say and to build their capacity. Peer power (www.peerpower.org.uk/) do some excellent work empowering those known to the criminal justice system in finding a voice and informing decision-makers.

Organisations that provide services to these young people need to ensure on-going and proactive ways for young people to be involved in shaping the types of services based on their needs.

We contacted every Youth Offending Service across London, hoping to receive referrals of these “**core participants**”; however, engagement and take up was low.

Group-work sessions took place in four to five locations across London with the “**core participants**” including New Horizons (Somers Town, Camden), Enfield Christian Housing (Edmonton), Catch-22 the Hive (Camden), Anstee Bridge alternative education provision (Kingston) and groups in Hackney.

Some longer semi-structured interviews took place with individuals from YOS teams or the secure estate (HMP High Down).

One particular group was more involved with making the film. They examined the issues coming up in the consultations, drew upon their own experiences and put together a film echoing the Campaign objectives.

We listened to the young people and encouraged them to identify what would support young people to stay outside of the criminal justice system.

List of organisations contacted: **Appendix 16**

Although our project worked with services and young people in London, we feel that the findings and recommendations are appropriate for elsewhere in the UK.

Indeed drawing upon some of the experiences of young Scottish prisoners and experiences from elsewhere has helped with project.



7. What we found



We worked with a core group of 20 young people (**core participants**) who had been in the criminal justice system and who drank alcohol. Of these young people (15 men, 5 women), all had been arrested whilst under the influence of alcohol or as a direct result of their alcohol use.

They attributed the alcohol with **'messing with their minds'** and felt that alcohol was a more problematic substance than other commonly used drugs like cannabis. (echoing the findings from the **Demon Drink** report)

Young people who misuse alcohol clearly need a lot of support. In their own words they have identified local youth clubs as providing that reliable, frontline support.

They saw youth clubs as a safe place you could always go to and where there would be support. Youth clubs also helped meet 'excitement' (adrenalin rush) needs by providing trips out. On occasions when their clubs were closed the young people stated they often got bored, hung-out in the street, got drunk and got into trouble.

- In conversations most of the young people felt that Cannabis was less likely to get you into 'trouble'. Whilst recognising its illegal status and that **'the feds may confiscate it'**; they reported that alcohol *messed with your mind*, made you do **'stupid things like get into fights.'**
- Common to most of the young men (8/15) was how they reported hanging out with older local men (because of a lack of a stable 'paternal' role-model) from the age of 13-14 and began drinking (and smoking) as part of belonging and participating in what that group did.
- All of the core group participants were open to the idea of support and someone to talk to, except one male who felt that it was **'too late for him'** (core participant #17 Camden, Male White British 18)
- All of the participants also expressed concern about the 'negative' effects on their lives (of entering the CJS). This included: the Stigma and how they were perceived, employment prospects, finding a decent job and an uncertain **future where your past does not go away** (core participant #6 Camden, Female Black British 18))

Core Participant #9 (Enfield, Male, Black British 20) reflects on his experience and involvement with the project

"I think that alcohol can be dangerous and if you drink too much, you're a young male and you're out in public you will get into trouble

All of my arrests were connected to drinking alcohol at least 9 separate occasions

I guess it either gave me false confidence or made me do stupid things cos I wasn't thinking straight

Of course I regret that now and how its held my life back

I got arrested when I was about 16 I got referred to an alcohol advisor it was a real eye opener

I saw the advisor for 2 weeks; it really helped at the time I stopped drinking and felt I could control it

After a while and when I was not getting any support I started drinking again I felt a lot of stress at the time

I think that having someone to talk to, someone you can trust that could be good

Maybe try to understand why they are drinking, support them to not get a criminal record

Another time a custody sergeant was talking to me and being supportive asking me why I drank so

much made me realise this person did care about me

I think it makes a difference if people like that can talk to you and support you and not just judge you

I realise though that I was not always open to support did not always think there was a problem

Young people need someone to talk to like a clinic, someone who cares about them

They also need to know that booze can mess you up in the head – your decision-making, making you angry and confrontational; much more than weed

There should be counsellors and clear support in schools and colleges and youth clubs

Peer to peer would be good I'd be interested in that

I like the peer court as well; involving young people is good and if you're judged by your peers but don't get a criminal record as long as you get help with your drinking that's got to be a good thing

Don't give up on young people if they don't want to admit they have a problem; stick with them try different things

I've found that once you have a criminal record (are known to the criminal justice system) things are much harder; I'm also lucky that I didn't go any further into the system, my brother was in jail think I've got to thank a few good people around me for that, the opportunities I have had to turn my life round"



“Messing with your minds, making stupid decisions”

This was a phrase we heard time and again from both core and wider participants.

The young people we spoke to made a direct link between the consumption of ‘an excessive’ amount of alcohol and poor decision-making.

Core Participant #2 (Brixton; Male Black Caribbean, 20):

Started drinking Rum heavily from the age of 13.

“My dad was not around I used to hang out with older people who treated me like one of them like an adult so I joined in with them this included drinking alcohol”

The affect alcohol had on him; “Not good I would lose control, get into an argument I otherwise would walk away from, this would escalate into a fight and could get more serious”

His first arrest was aged 12 for attempted robbery. He was arrested again aged 14 for motor theft, having been drinking at the time. He was ‘sent’ to the YOT, but felt they did not care or offer him support. The YOT was also located in an area that did not feel safe for him so he stopped attending. On another occasion he was stabbed during a fight after he had been drinking.

“I wanted to live a different life but I could not get out of the area. There was no-where else for me to go, I don’t know anyone in other parts of the country”

“My current case, I wasn’t drunk at the time of arrest but I had been to a party the night before and drank alcohol; I made some poor decisions as a result of the alcohol. I could have and should have acted differently and believe I would sober. But I’d been drinking and made a series of poor decisions. The following morning I was sober and I realised how stupid it was and I had changed my mind, but it was it was too late armed police swooped on me and the car”

Core participant #1 was arrested on 6 occasions, drunk each time; usually for fighting and culminating in assaulting police on the last occasion. He was in regular employment but lost his job after losing his licence for riding a moped under the influence of alcohol.

All of the participants stated they regret entering the criminal justice system and believe this will limit their life outcomes.

Most felt that they could have benefited from having someone to talk to regularly.

Core Participant #1 felt that

“meeting and talking to my worker (from the substance misuse team) really helped. I thought I could handle my drink but getting nicked I guess showed I couldn’t. Just being able to talk to someone and trying to get on top of my drinking helped me get on better with my mum and think about getting a job again”

A disconnect with the London Youth Offending Services (YOS)

Most London Youth Offending Services felt they had far more young people with cannabis and gang involvement offences to deal with compared to alcohol.

However, one study suggests high alcohol use amongst gang members is up to 11 times more ‘dependent’ than non-gang members^{xxxi} Appendix 10

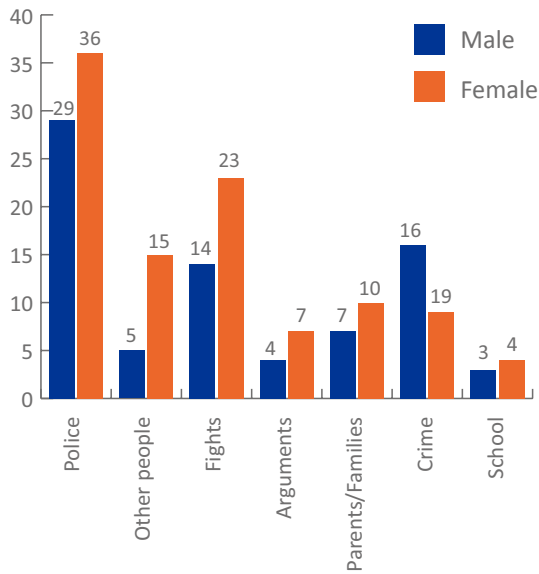
In addition, one young man (core participant #14, Male, Asian 19) we met stated that he increasingly relied on alcohol to cope with the stressful and violent lifestyle associated with his gang involvement.

London YOS teams feel they are confronted far more by cannabis use amongst young people than alcohol. Yet the young people we spoke to (core group and wider participants) stated that alcohol was problematic regarding ‘risky behaviours’. A recent report by the Drinks Business suggests that alcohol is more of a gateway substance than cannabis^{xxxii}. In our conversations young people reported consuming whatever came their way.

The charity, Criminal Justice Together, working closely with the London Liaison and Diversion sites, **offers an early opportunity** of identifying problematic alcohol use amongst young people, particularly, when the young person may be attempting to cope with their mental ill health through alcohol use. (Appendix 8)

Darren Hayes writing for **children and young people now** stated in August 2016 that “a shift from punitive, legal response to youth offending to one that prioritises prevention through support has seen a dramatic fall in the number of young people involved in the criminal justice system.”^{xxxiii}.

Get into trouble with who?



We believe we can reduce this even further by adopting a raft of measures identifying and supporting young people who may have problematic alcohol use, offering alternatives to the criminal justice system, addressing their needs and helping them in their transition to adulthood.

Findings from our wider consultation

83% males and **84%** females reported that many under 18's drank alcohol where they lived.

They thought that alcohol:

"..doesn't make you aware of your actions; you become aggressive and even vulnerable" (WP #22)

"It affects their ability to sensibly judge situations and makes them take things less seriously" (WP #47)

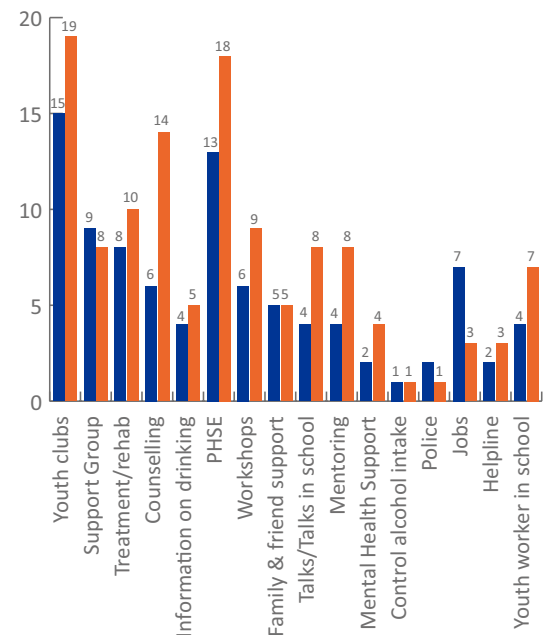
90% of young males and **96%** young females felt you were more likely to get into trouble if you drank alcohol.

They suggested a range of support, diversion and treatment services.

Establishing numbers

Approximately **41%** of young people in the UK report being drunk or having drunk alcohol at time of offence /arrest.^{xxxx}

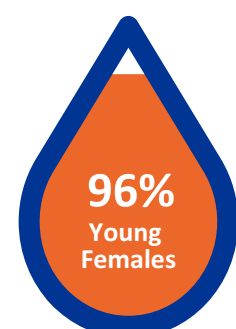
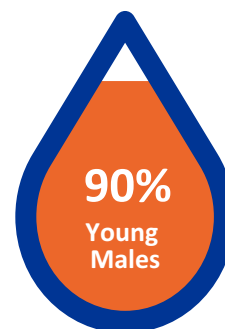
What help and support is needed to keep young people who drink alcohol out of trouble?



All organisations we contacted or met with working with young people in the criminal justice or treatment sectors felt they did or would have young people they could refer who were known to the criminal justice system and (mis)used alcohol.

Figures from London YOS teams, (anonymous survey September 2016) suggests they are seeing up to **500** young people annually with alcohol related offences.

From our survey **80%** of London YOS teams feel there should be a more extensive range of health, social and diversionary options for young people who have drunk alcohol and committed 'low level' offences; helping to keep them out of the criminal justice system.



90% of young males and 96% young females felt you were more likely to get into trouble if you drank alcohol.

8. Realising the Vision

Young people are still open to learning and need high quality experiences to develop strategies for dealing with risks including alcohol.

Youth clubs, diversion programmes and personal development opportunities like the Princes Trust offer young people opportunities for personal and social development in a supportive environment.

The trusted, voluntary relationship youth workers have with young people means they are well placed to be ‘competent’ in having conversations with young people about alcohol and deliver IBA. Youth work has traditionally sought to empower young people with information, skills and confidence to understand and address a range of issues and risks faced in adolescence. A thorough programme of compulsory PSHE in schools and opportunities for more in depth follow up in youth clubs would support young people in developing those skills in navigating their way into early adulthood.

8.1 Valuing proactive youth support and diversionary work

“Give the youths more things to do; youth clubs are really important provide activities. It’s all about having things to do stave off boredom [you] need to really motivate and encourage young people to develop their interests; if they play football get them into a team with proper kit and fixtures” (cp #2)

Unisons recent report “A future at risk Cuts in youth services”, stated that:

“Youth services do a vital job in our communities. The benefits they provide for young people are real and long-lasting. While many other public services step in when problems occur, youth services prevent so many of those difficulties from occurring in

the first place. Youth services help young people to lead positive lives as members of society.”^{xxxx}

A report by On Side Youth Zones (September 2016) found that 81% of 14-16 year olds didn’t think their local area offered them enough to do outside of school.^{xxxx}

8.1.1 New Horizons Youth Club

This is an excellent example of a front-line youth centre working with young people with high and multiple needs. Music, dance, gym, cooking, drama, painting, fashion design, photography are just some of the exciting programmes you can get involved in at New Horizons Youth Centre.

This project has been shown to make a real difference to the young people using it and they are actively involved through the youth forum. Vulnerable young people are welcomed and receive valued support, advice and practical help.

They also run a weekend service which offers homeless and vulnerably housed young people a range of services including referrals to emergency accommodation; breakfast; hot showers; warm clothes; access to a counsellor; and use of the music studio. In addition young people using the centre must take part in an accredited award scheme (AQA). This scheme is run on both days, and students take part in a class on numeracy, literacy, or PSHE. Subjects covered in these classes include algebra, percentages, sexual health, careers, healthy relationships, discrimination and speeches made by famous people.

<http://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/>

8.1.2 Salmon Youth Centre

The Salmon Centre in Bermondsey has been reaching out to young people in inner city London

for over a hundred years.

Salmon's youth work model is based on the foundation of "open access" for all young people. Their multi-purpose facilities and skilled staff members provide a safe place and purpose for young people from the ages of 6 to 24. Salmon supports young people's transition to adulthood.

Their whole staff team, including volunteers, were trained in IBA which enabled them to plan a programme of activities in partnership with young people addressing risks associated with alcohol. The staff team are more competent and confident in being able to discuss alcohol with the young people.

<http://www.salmoncentre.co.uk/>

8.1.3 Hackney Quest

Hackney Quest (HQ) has been providing positive support to young people and families from Hackney since 1988. Originally set up by serving police officers keen to forge more positive relationships with young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system, the charity continues to support young people at risk. HQ helps young people build confidence, develop new skills, and widen their perspectives as well as uncover existing strengths and capacities. HQ helps young people find resources and help from each other through forging supportive relationships that realise the potential for positive change that lies within them as individuals, families, and as a community. The project lead carried out consultation with the young people and staff were able to lead discussions and activities addressing risky drinking with them.

<http://www.hackneyquest.org.uk/>

8.1.4 Achieving for Children Youth Offending Service Youth Board

Young Offenders are invited to be part of the youth board. Developing a role for young people to have a say in the design and delivery of the service, young people have been trained to take on active roles. A team of young people (young offenders) were trained to deliver social education workshops in local

youth clubs. Others led on consultation into those not in education, employment or training (NEET), created a safeguarding campaign and made films about risky behaviours amongst young people.^{xxxvii}

Young people are already trying to be in the vanguard of reversing cuts to youth services. "In Southwark, for example, a recent campaign run by young people themselves has been successful in over-turning plans that would have meant the loss of a youth centre and 80 youth work jobs, as well as the conversion of the other seven youth centres in the borough into more generic leisure centres."^{xxxviii}

8.2 Engagement and Diversion through Sport

Sport is a popular and proven diversionary activity for many young people.

'Kickz' sees Premier League clubs – along with others in the Football League – work with their local police forces to engage with young people in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. They work well in partnership with local pupil referral units, youth offending teams and MOPAC.

Using the power of football and the appeal of the clubs, Kickz has successfully engaged 19,000 young people and has over 100 different projects right across the country.^{xxxix}

Young people recognise the adrenalin buzz of sports as an alternative to consuming alcohol. **Clinks** submission to the review of the youth justice system noted, "there are less places for young people to express themselves through music, gym, football, studio time. Youth centres are safe spaces young people can go to. These facilities would be able to spot a problem or be of help if the young person gets into trouble. Youth workers are usually people young people can trust, speak to and listen to"^{xl}

Voluntary sector organisations are seen as having key roles to play here in offering complementary interventions in areas such as the arts, sport and training/employment, in providing supportive relationships through volunteer mentoring, and in acting as bridges to wider community resources.^{xli}

8.3 Empowering Young People through Learning



There is growing support to make PSHE compulsory, which would present an ideal opportunity of ensuring all young people have access to good quality learning experiences addressing a range of risks associated with adolescence, including alcohol, risky behaviours, vulnerabilities and the dangers of getting arrested

A recent report by Demos made the following recommendation ^{xiii}.

“Recommendation 16: The Department for Education (DfE) should continue to invest in trialling and evaluating new programmes in schools tackling risky behaviour (such as alcohol use)..... providing greater support for successful programmes to scale.”

Over the past two decades life skills education has started to play an important role for social and personal development of young people. Life skills help children, youth and adults to assess risky situations and behaviours and make rational choices in front of everyday challenges.

Life skills based education promotes mental well-being in young people, helps them face various and difficult situations in life, and equips individuals to behave in a pro-social way. At the heart of life skills education is the learning of life skills, including skills for *“building self-esteem, setting realistic goals, coping with anxiety, resisting pressures, communicating effectively, making decisions, managing conflict and dealing assertively with social situations”* (WHO, 1997).

In the recent years life skills education has become important for contributing towards high quality education. Including life skills in teaching curricula (or other educational or personal development programmes delivered both in schools and in other settings) is important as, through this learning, children and young people can gain more control on their lives and make better rational choices. It

also helps children to safely make transition into adolescence and then into adulthood encouraging positive social norms. ^{xiii}

Peer Education can enhance PSHE and is well-placed to tackle topics that address risk taking amongst young people.

Equipping young people with skills and resilience, strategies to cope and trusted people to talk to will empower many young people to deal with the associated risks of alcohol.

8.4 Health & Social pathways and treatment



For those who slip through the net a range of health and social options or treatment pathways are necessary.

Although youth offending teams are rolling out ASSET+, which incorporate the use of AUDIT; we feel that screening for problematic alcohol use needs to be even more effective ^{xiv}.

AssetPlus is a new assessment and planning interventions framework developed by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to replace Asset and its associated tools.

AUDIT is the recognised Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. However when working with young people Alcohol Concern feel that their Thinking About Drinking Tool (TAD tool; Appendix 5) is more appropriate.

Once identified, these young people should be referred into an appropriate course of action that keeps them outside of the criminal justice system (for first time or low level offences).

Lord McNally, Chairman of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in his recent speech ‘Young People and the Justice System - Delivering a Positive Outcome’, (13th September 2016) stated that “Since becoming Chairman of the YJB, I have seen and heard countless examples of where, if someone, or some service, or some facility, or some help had been around sooner; a young person could have been saved from being a victim of crime or an offender.”

There needs to be improvements in alcohol treatment services offered to young people. Drugscopes report in 2010: Young people’s

drug and alcohol treatment at the crossroads recognised that:

“Working with young people in treatment is not only about problem drug or alcohol use, but multiple needs. Most young people who enter specialist drug or alcohol treatment have other, often multiple needs, such as mental health issues, involvement with the criminal justice system, social exclusion, or lack of education, training or employment opportunities”

“We need investment in community and social regeneration as well as one-to-one support. It is important not to frame young people’s substance misuse in exclusively individual and therapeutic terms and fail to invest in community resources. Employment and meaningful activity, decent accommodation and access to leisure activities for young people are all vital.”

8.5 Actively Involving young people; co-production



Youth participation and co-production are effective way of involving young people in the design and delivery of services. Methods and effective examples of involving young people in having a say on how services operate and how they meet their needs are well established.

It is vital that there are well funded and on-going ways for young people known to the criminal justice system to have a voice.

Our recommendation that young people have an on-going involvement, reviewing alcohol and young people entering the Criminal Justice System and the effectiveness of alternatives could be taken on

by the newly developed youth panel scheme by the charity Mentor. They would be would be an ideal group to undertake this role and should be supported to do so ^{xvii}.

Clinks works to support voluntary organisations working within the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales, and to campaign for better criminal justice policy and practice. Clinks advocates for service user involvement.

One of our key recommendations is to pilot a peer court in London.

London would make an excellent pilot area with young people, ready and willing to take up the roles and a broad range of specialist organisations who can work with the Mayors Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) and the Youth Justice Board to deliver this and make a sustainable contribution to youth justice in the capital. During our wider consultation we ran workshops asking young people to choose what they considered the most appropriate ‘disposal’ of a low level alcohol related offence involving a young person.

During these workshops the majority of young people were empathic to the situation other young people may get into as result of alcohol use. They felt these young people needed support understanding and possibly treatment. When considering the best way forward of addressing the young persons’ behaviour and the possibility of any positive change they supported the introduction of a peer court. They felt it would:

- Give a clear role for other young people in addressing risky behaviours amongst young people
- Provide an opportunity of looking at the whole picture behind that young persons offence
- Enable the offender to take responsibility by choosing the peer court and abiding by the decision; providing a second chance for them outside of the criminal justice system
- Show a positive side of young people willing to engage in addressing youth offending

Young people with lived experience could become part of the peer court, but there are also other ways of involving the in the design and delivery of youth justice.

Clinks is committed to promoting and supporting the development of service user involvement in the CJS, including by and within voluntary sector organisations.^{xvii} They believe it is “key to the difference we can make in the lives of offenders - improving the quality and impact of the services on offer, and enabling services users to build a new identity which supports their journey to desistance from crime.

Gareth Jones, chair of The Association of Youth Offending Team Managers recently informed Charlie Taylor (the man leading the youth justice review) that children should have a **stronger voice in the youth justice system**.

This comment has been further strengthened by children and young people in a fascinating report published recently by Clinks in collaboration with Peer Power and Beyond Youth Custody^{xviii}.

They also thought there would be significant value in opportunities for collective consultation with young people with experience of youth justice, aimed at improving services.

“Something like Children in Care Councils can be good, as young people see stuff that adults don’t.” “No-one sits you down and asks what you can improve on, and make positive contributions... they should ask advice from young people ‘cos they know how to help young people.” There was a real appetite among the young people to have their voices heard, be involved in future consultation and make a difference.

Offering youth participation opportunities within youth justice ensures young people’s needs and experiences are fully incorporated and that services can respond accordingly.

The personal gains and benefits to those involved, improving their employability and life chances after the setbacks of entering the criminal justice system, can be immense.

HM inspectorate of probation report “Desistance and young people” May 2016 looked at the effectiveness of YOT’s in supporting young people away from offending amongst its recommendations to YOT managers is “opportunities are developed for children and young people to participate in community activities to motivate them to take a greater role in their neighbourhood” (desistance domain 5)

8.6 Changes to Youth Justice



In September 2015, Charlie Taylor was asked to lead a departmental review of the youth justice system for the Ministry of Justice. The review is examining evidence on what works to prevent youth crime and rehabilitate young offenders, and how this is applied in practice; how the youth justice system can most effectively interact with wider services for children and young people.

Draft findings indicate:

“that many staff working in YOIs and STCs do not have the skills and experience to manage the most vulnerable and challenging young people in their care, nor have they had sufficient training to fulfil these difficult roles.”^{xlix}

Further, that “evidence shows that contact with the criminal justice system can have a tainting effect on some children making them more likely to reoffend, and that the diversion of low-level offenders through informal responses such as restorative justice or providing access to specific support services can often be a more effective and efficient response than the use of formal court sanctions” (p.10)

“We must make sure that a child’s contact with the criminal justice system, particularly where this is fleeting or the result of low-level offending, does not disproportionately impair their prospects of pursuing their aspirations and playing a full role in society. (p 10)

The long overdue Charlie Taylor review into youth justice highlights how our society treats young people in the justice system and how they can be let down.

Colin Allars, newly appointed CEO to the Youth Justice Board stated he expected to ensure a “continued focus on the needs of children and young people, as we enter a period of reform.”

With a 70% re-offending rate and young people being locked up because of addiction and undiagnosed conditions there is a strong case for change.

As Mat Llic, strategic director for justice at catch-22 said:

“A criminal record shouldn’t be synonymous with a future without opportunity. The justice secretary talks about ‘forgiveness’ and ‘redemption’. It is in our public interest to build both a criminal justice system which rehabilitates, and a society which gives second chances. All we need now is greater public interest, to help drive this revolution - let’s end youth offending altogether.” (July 2016 Blog)

We need to have accurate figures to monitor the progress of our campaign recommendations. Integral to this should be an on-going role for young people to both oversee and steer the campaign for fewer young people entering the criminal justice system as a result of their alcohol use.

We recognise the challenges of diverting young people away from crime at various stages of adolescence and the valuable contribution that the voluntary sector plays.

We call upon all stakeholders and service provider to join our Campaign.

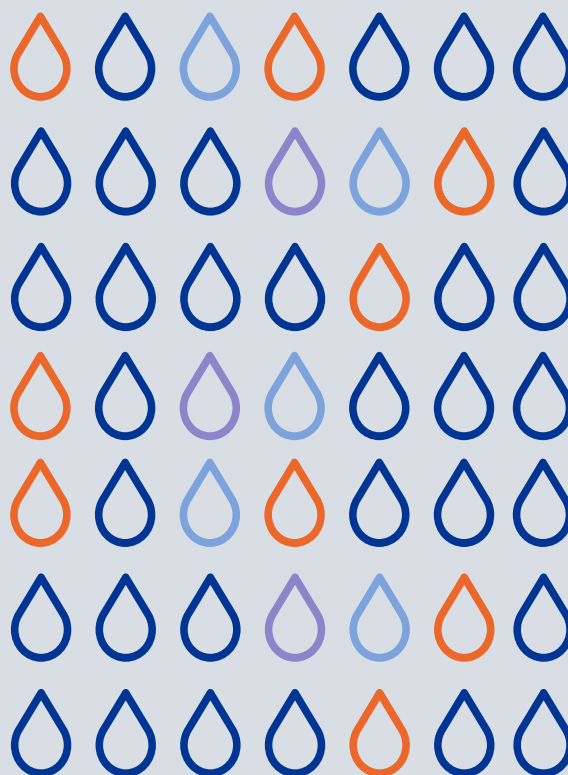
9. Event

An event is taking place at City Hall, hosted by MOPAC on 7th November

Policy and decision-makers, front-line practitioners, commissioners, stakeholders and fellow professionals will share the project outcomes and recommendations and will be invited to pledge their support to our Campaign objective.

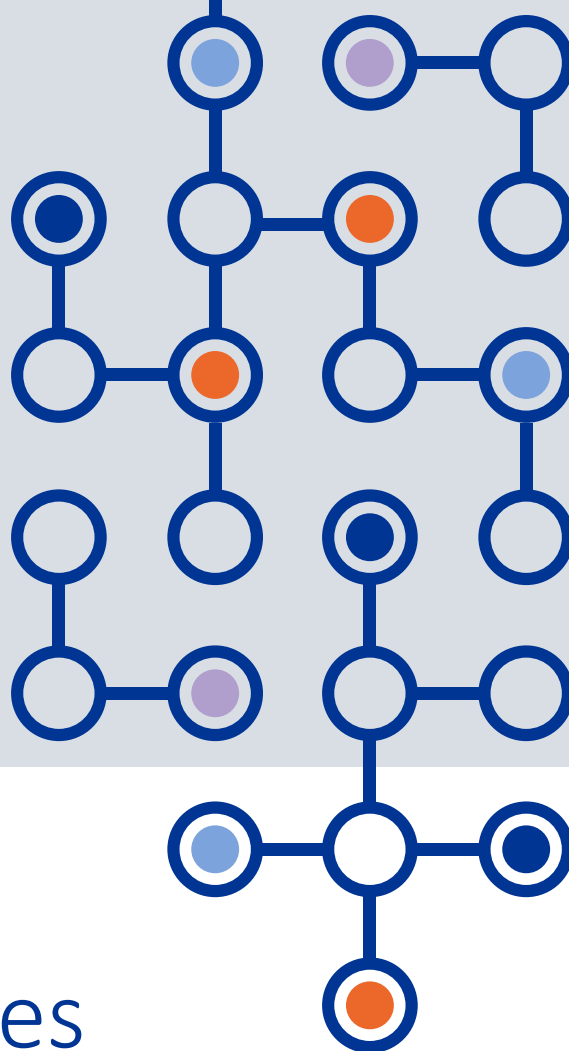
Presenting on the day will be:

- Hampshire Peer Court members
- Mentor UK; Breaking out ‘peer education’ project
- NHS England Commissioners of the London Liaison and Diversion trial site
- Young people



Appendices

Appendices at:
[http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/aitappendices](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/aitsappendices)



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