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1. A guide to Alcohol Awareness Week

About Alcohol Awareness Week

Launched by Alcohol Concern, Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW) 2010 runs from Monday 18 to Sunday 24 October. The theme for AAW 2010 is alcohol and childhood. This encompasses both the impact of alcohol use by young people and the impact of parental attitudes towards alcohol on children.

Within this broad theme, Alcohol Concern is planning three main areas of focus around the issues of further support and services for young problematic drinkers, additional training for professionals working with children and parents and reducing the impact of alcohol advertising on young people.

Alcohol Concern will produce:

- a major report on ‘Young People and Alcohol Harms’. This will examine how local areas currently identify and support young drinkers, particularly those attending A&E or dealt with by the police. The report will include new statistics and case studies.
- a joint policy paper with the Children’s Society on the impact of parental drinking on children. This will examine whether enough is being done to identify risk, protect children and raise awareness of the problem.
- a report into alcohol marketing, with new statistics on the numbers of children affected. This will focus on alcohol marketing during the world cup, cinema advertising and case studies from children on how many alcohol adverts they come across on a daily basis. The report will call for a radical shake up of the advertising rules.

There will also be an opportunity during the week, for young people to log the number of adverts they see regularly and pass this information onto Alcohol Concern.

Alcohol Concern will produce a Constituency Alcohol Bulletin for each MP during the week. This will detail the LAPE (Local Alcohol Profiles England) statistics per MP constituency and can be used as part of a letter-writing campaign asking MPs to sign up to the three campaign asks. Alcohol services will be invited to hold open days on the Friday (or whenever suits), to invite their MP to see the work they do.

Campaign timetable:

- Monday 18 October: Launch of Children and Families report and Parliamentary Reception
- Tuesday 19 October: Launch of Alcohol Marketing report
- Saturday 23 October: Launch of Youth Drinking/IBA report

What will Balance do?

During AAW Balance, the North East Alcohol Office, will launch a regional communications campaign, seeking to challenge some of the popular misperceptions (or perceived social norms) around parents, young people and alcohol. You will find some of the campaign resources within this Toolkit.

Why we are launching our campaign

Alcohol is part of life for children and young people growing up in the North East. A recent national survey showed that children in this region drink alcohol at younger ages and in greater quantities than their peers anywhere else in the country. Similarly, the Local Alcohol Profiles for England, released in September 2010, showed that the North East has some of the highest rates of alcohol-specific hospital admissions amongst under-18s and tackling alcohol misuse amongst this age group is a major priority for partners across the region.

However, recent studies show that the overall number of children and young people drinking alcohol has reduced since 1995. Similarly, social norms projects, carried out in several North East localities have indicated that the vast majority of young people aged 11-16 do not drink alcohol, thereby challenging some of the stereotypes of young people in the region. Earlier this year, Balance also commissioned a piece of research looking at parental attitudes towards young people’s alcohol consumption. This indicated that 85% of parents had never bought alcohol for their children aged 10-17, while four in five parents agreed that children aged 13-15 should never drink alcohol.

With this in mind, Balance plans to highlight some of the more positive social norms around parents, young people and alcohol, with the twin aims of undermining misperceptions and ‘nudging’ behaviour change in the minority of young people who choose to drink and parents who enable children and young people to drink. The activity set out in this pack is one step on our journey towards achieving this and we need your help to make it happen.

About Balance

Balance is the North East of England’s alcohol office, the first of its kind in the UK. It aims to encourage people in the North East to reduce how much alcohol they drink so they can live healthier lives in safer communities.

www.balancenortheast.co.uk
2. A guide to getting the most from your AAW toolkit

**Background and context**

Balance has consulted a variety of children and young people’s alcohol leads on the content of this toolkit. The office was keen to develop a sustainable resource, which as well as being of use during AAW, would support you in delivering activity in the long-term.

With this in mind, we have divided the toolkit into three categories and drawn up a short summary exploring how you might make the best use of each of the resources.

**Part 1 – Resources for use during AAW**

Partners across the region have asked for Balance’s support in promoting activity during AAW, both via local media routes and with the general public. The following materials could be used for this purpose:

- **Communications/media resources** – these will support you in dealing with any media enquiries and in raising awareness of alcohol-related issues during AAW and beyond. Balance is also pleased to offer a free one-day media training course for local children and young people’s alcohol leads. Please contact the office if you would like any more information about this.

- **Balance AAW campaign materials** – Balance will run a region-wide advertising campaign during AAW 2010. This will seek to challenge some of the popular misperceptions (or perceived social norms) around parents, young people and alcohol. The campaign materials contained within this toolkit will help you to supplement Balance’s regional marketing activity at a local level. The office will also carry out a campaign evaluation to demonstrate the effectiveness of key messaging and this will be shared with partners at the earliest opportunity.

**Part 2 – Generic resources for AAW and beyond**

Partners suggested that it would also be useful to develop a variety of generic resources for use with young people, parents and schools. The following materials could be used during AAW, but also in the longer-term:

- **Glossary of resources for practitioners, schools, parents and young people** – this includes a selection of the best websites, reports and guidance documents, providing information, support and advice around alcohol. The glossary is divided into several sections:
  - general alcohol
  - alcohol, children and young people
  - alcohol and families
  - supporting alcohol education in schools
  - reports/guidance documents.

- **Fact sheet on the benefits of alcohol education** – this short, factual document will help you to ‘sell’ the benefits of alcohol education within a school environment. It argues that alcohol education and prevention activity are key components in influencing some of the choices that young people make in relation to alcohol and it highlights the positive role that teachers can play in terms of influencing their pupils’ decision-making processes.

- **Advice and support services for young carers** – a recent study carried out by the NSPCC showed that an increasing number of young people are contacting ChildLine due to concern over their parents’ alcohol use. This short document, aimed primarily at young people suffering from these issues (and also the adults working with them), gives advice and guidance on how to deal with parental alcohol misuse. It also references where young people can go to access support, highlighting several national support services and signposting them to local ‘Young Carers’ associations.

- **‘Your Kids and Alcohol’ leaflet** – a recent Drinkaware/YouGov poll showed that over a third of 16 and 17 year-olds would prefer to get information on alcohol from their parents. The research also indicated that it is preferable to talk to children about alcohol at a young age, as their openness to parental influence changes dramatically as they grow up. Between the ages of eight and 12, children generally accept what their parents say about alcohol. However, from the age of 13 onwards, young people increasingly pay attention to their friends. Despite this, parents still have more leverage with their children than they might think. This leaflet is aimed at parents and sets out to answer any questions they and their children may have about alcohol. It also offers advice and help to parents on how best to approach their children regarding the subject.
Part 3 – Longer-term resource
Balance has been asked by several local alcohol leads to support social norms activity at a local level. With this in mind, the following resource could be used on a long-term basis within your locality.

• **Step-by-step ‘social norms’ project implementation plan** – this step-by-step guidance document has been devised to support you in developing and implementing a ‘social norms’ project within your locality. The office envisages that you could use AAW as an opportunity to highlight and promote social norms-based activity with schools in your area and subsequently develop a longer-term, mainstream project, aimed at promoting behaviour change amongst young people. Balance is keen to work with you in delivering ‘social norms’ activity in your locality and the document also sets out what the office could do to support you and a checklist of the main activities you would need to undertake in delivering a successful project.

• **Commissioning a social norms project – how Balance can help** – this short document sets out some of the potential costs and benefits of developing and implementing a social norms project in your locality and outlines how Balance may be able to support you in undertaking this commissioning decision.

Conclusion
We hope that you will find these resources useful and please do not hesitate to contact Balance if you require any further information about how to make maximum use of your toolkit. All of the information contained in this pack is also available electronically and we would encourage you to issue relevant information to participating schools and contacts within your locality, so that we achieve the best possible results in your area.
3. Media ideas

We’re aware that your capacity to support the promotion of alcohol issues through AAW may be limited – so we are here to help. We’ve suggested some ideas which only require you to insert an organization quote and issue to your local media, while others will obviously require a little more time. We are grateful for any help you can give.

Here are some ideas:

1. Pre AAW
   - Add a quote to the attached ‘Children and alcohol don’t mix’ template news release. First of all, we’ll contact you to find out if you want to contribute a quote you can then send us the quote and we’ll issue the release for you.
   - Complement the release by using the background information on AAW, young people and alcohol, weblinks for further information and contacts for support services (all included in this pack) on your website or in internal/external publications.
   - We are currently pursuing an opportunity to film a news piece with BBC national news. The reporter is hoping to track down a young case study who is currently in treatment for alcohol misuse. We realise that this is quite an ask, and have suggested it may be easier to work with someone who have been through the system and come out the other side successfully. We could obviously anonymise any case studies if necessary. Anyone interested in taking up this opportunity is invited to contact Matt (details below).

2. During AAW
   - During AAW, Balance is working with schools in Gateshead and Newcastle to produce a large scale artwork to demonstrate the impact that alcohol advertising has on children and young people. We are working with a local artist who will be undertaking art sessions with children to see what, if anything, they recall from alcohol adverts they have seen and using art to capture the results. You could replicate this work through straw polls of schools/colleges in your locality and releasing the results. If you’re interested in setting up something similar – contact Matt Forster on 0191 2614250 or e-mail mattf@gardiner-richardson.com to discuss the details.
   - Add a quote to the ‘North East parents back advertising ban’ release template and issue to your local media on Monday, October 18. To save yourself time – send us the quotes and we’ll insert it and issue for you.
   - During AAW, Alcohol Concern will be issuing three reports (further detail and dates of release in the About AAW section of this toolkit). Using these reports as inspiration and ‘news hooks’ we have come up with some ideas for potential coverage. These are:
     - Raise awareness of any schemes you run which tackle youth drinking (such as the award winning Sub 21 project to reduce kerbside drinking in North Tyneside). Alcohol Concern will be making the point in its report on young people and alcohol use that more needs to be spent on intervention as it costs less than treatment. You may even be able to provide estimates for the cost of treating young people for alcohol problems and compare these to the cost of prevention work.
     - Raise awareness of specialist treatment services that you run. As above, Alcohol Concern touches on the number of children and young people receiving treatment in the UK. Using this as a news hook – there is the opportunity to localize this story.
     - Raise awareness of support services. As the theme is children and young people’s alcohol consumption, AAW provides the perfect opportunity to place a feature on the support available to young people in your locality.
     - Are you involved in delivering Identification and Brief Advice (IBA)? Alcohol Concern will be discussing IBA in its report on children and young people’s consumption – again, this would be perfect feature material. For instance you could focus on any work you are doing around ‘alarm bell moments’ (when a child ends up in A&E or custody through alcohol use). The piece could focus on the decisive action you take to start the process towards help/support.
3. Communications/media resources

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 HOURS ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14

Children and alcohol don’t mix – the region has spoken

The overwhelming majority of north easterners have never bought alcohol for their children, according to research published today (XXX).

More than eight in ten of the region’s parents said they had not purchased alcohol for their children aged 17-years and under, according to a survey carried out by Balance, the North East alcohol office.

And more than half (three in five) say they have never given alcohol to their children, aged 17 or under.

The office canvassed the opinions of more than 1,000 adults across the region to discover what drinking practices our region finds acceptable and those that it doesn’t.

And the region said that children and young people drinking alcohol is most definitely unacceptable, with almost eight in ten north easterners saying that young people between the ages of 13 and 15-years-old shouldn’t drink alcohol.

The survey also revealed that adults misusing alcohol around children is frowned upon – with four in five agreeing that adults should never drink too much in front of children.

The research, which builds on last year’s North East Big Drink Debate, reveals that:

• eight in ten adults think that children between the ages of 13 and 15 should never drink alcohol.
• more than a third think that 16-17 year-olds should never drink alcohol.

The survey has been issued to highlight Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW) 2010, which begins on Monday, October 18. During AAW, Balance will launch an advertising campaign aimed at demonstrating that underage drinking is not a social norm.

Colin Shevills, Director of Balance, explained: “These figures demonstrate that for an overwhelming majority of north easterners, it’s just not considered normal for children and young people to drink alcohol or for their parents or other adults to enable them to drink alcohol.

“All too often we hear that consuming alcohol at an early age is a right of passage and that young people are going to drink no matter what we as parents do. Myths such as these have helped create a situation where we mistakenly believe that drinking alcohol at an early age is a ‘social norm’ that everyone is doing it and we may as well let our children be part of the crowd by buying alcohol for or giving alcohol to our children.

“This research goes to show that the North East, on the whole, doesn’t subscribe to these mistaken beliefs. The vast majority of parents and adults in this region believe it unacceptable for children and young people to drink. We know this strength of mind is having a real impact on reducing the number of children and young people who take up drinking at an early age.

“We hope this knowledge will provide the minority of parents who are allowing their children to drink at an early age, or turning a blind eye, with a different perspective and the confidence to make the right decision when it comes to letting their children drink. Statistics show that while the number of young people drinking alcohol in the region falls, those that are drinking, are drinking more than ever before. We need their parents to realise the damage it is doing to their sons and daughters and take some action before it’s too late.”

Evidence has shown that alcohol seriously impairs brain development in young people and the former Chief Medical Officer advised that young people should experience an alcohol free childhood until at least the age of 15-years-old.

Research carried out by the Government shows that 80% of young people who felt their parents would disapprove of them drinking had never drunk alcohol. However statistics also show that many parents do not speak to their children about alcohol until their child gets drunk for the first time, which is too late.
Balance’s research discovered that parents and other adults in the North East acknowledge the need to talk to their children about alcohol misuse and its consequences. Almost six in ten of those surveyed said that parents should talk to their children about alcohol by age 13. Government research shows that parents should be talking to their children as early as the age of eight.

Colin added: “It is of vital importance that parents begin to talk to their children, about alcohol around the time they begin secondary school. Leaving it until 13 may be too late – as they may already have consumed alcohol. This will help ensure that young people have the confidence and knowledge necessary to make an informed decision, long before they find themselves in a situation involving alcohol. It will ensure that they are adequately prepared.

“There will be many moments in a young person’s life when they will be called upon to make an important decision and parents have a duty to make their children aware, sooner rather than later, that consuming too much alcohol can lead to poor judgement and risky situations.

“No one should be letting alcohol make their decisions for them. All too often this can lead to fights, one-night stands and the resulting STD or unwanted pregnancy or an evening in A&E.

“I can’t stress enough how much influence parents have in ensuring that their children make the right decisions, for instance, research shows that young people are 12 times less likely to drink alcohol if their parents set clear boundaries.”

He added that these clear boundaries included leading by example and not encouraging children and young people to drink by consuming large quantities of alcohol, or regularly consuming alcohol, in their presence – teaching the lesson that alcohol misuse is normal and acceptable.

Notes to editors
Government research shows that 40% of 13 year olds and 58% of the 15 year olds who have drunk alcohol had experienced negative consequences, including having an argument or fight; visiting an A&E department, being admitted to hospital overnight or having an injury. Results from a survey published in December 2009 showed parents often fail to make the link between alcohol and risky behaviours.

About Balance
Balance is the North East of England’s alcohol office, the first of its kind in the UK. It aims to encourage people in the North East to reduce how much alcohol they drink so they can live healthier lives in safer communities.

About AAW
Launched by Alcohol Concern, Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW) 2010 runs from Monday 18 to Sunday 24 October. The theme for AAW 2010 is ‘alcohol and childhood’. This encompasses both the impact of alcohol use by young people and the impact of parental drinking on children.

Alcohol Concern is inviting partners from public health, treatment services providers, local authorities, the medical and social care professions and the general public to participate in AAW and use it as an opportunity to highlight societal harm caused by alcohol misuse.

Alcohol Concern aims to use AAW to highlight certain key trends that relate to ‘alcohol and childhood’ and some of the policy recommendations we believe might help tackle the highlighted problems. Areas AC is aiming to look at are:

- The increase in average consumption levels amongst 11-15 year olds
- Under 18 alcohol-related A&E attendances and how to best approach interventions with under 18s
- The level of alcohol advertising and marketing that young people are exposed to; this would also entail looking at the regulatory regime for alcohol advertising
- The connection between parental alcohol consumption and attitudes and young people’s drinking
- The rise in ‘home-drinking’ and the effect this might have on childhood
- The relationship between alcohol consumption, child protection and the work of social workers

www.balancenortheast.co.uk
During AAW 2010, Alcohol Concern will:

- Release three reports:
  - A joint policy paper with the Children’s Society on the impact of parental drinking on children (Monday, October 18). This will examine whether enough is being done to identify risk, protect children and raise awareness of the problem.
  - A report into alcohol marketing, with new statistics on the numbers of children affected (Tuesday, October 19). This will focus on alcohol marketing during the world cup, cinema advertising and case studies from children on how many alcohol adverts they come across on a daily basis. The report will call for a radical shake up of the advertising rules.
  - A report on ‘Youth and Alcohol Harms’ (Saturday, October 23). This will examine how local areas currently identify and support young drinkers, particularly those attending A&E or dealt with by the police. The report will include new statistics and case studies.
- Use the key findings from these new reports to generate press interest and media coverage.
- Hold a parliamentary reception and invite decision makers, politicians and relevant stakeholders – we are likely to launch one of our reports during this event.
- Produce and distribute a campaign pack for local alcohol services to engage with politicians, the local media and the general public to highlight the importance of alcohol treatment.

About a minimum price

A minimum price is about ensuring alcohol is not available for pocket money prices. It will have greatest effect on strong, cheap alcohol and the introduction of a minimum price of 50p per unit as recommended by the former Chief Medical Officer would have the following impact:

- An own brand three litre bottle of strong cider with an alcohol unit content of 15.9 currently available at £2.73 would increase to £7.95.
- An own brand bottle of vodka with an alcohol unit content of 28, currently available at £6.41, would increase to £14.00.
- However, a bottle of wine with an alcohol content of 10.1 available at £5.93 would not increase, nor would a pint of lager bought from a local pub.

The introduction of a minimum price is further supported by research carried out by the University of Sheffield which shows that a minimum price of 50p per unit would cut consumption and consequentially deaths, crimes and hospital admissions and reduce the economic burden.

- ENDS -

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Reporters, photographers and film crews are invited to attend our alcohol advertising ‘action art’ session at BALTIC on Monday, October 18 between 10am and 2pm. Pupils and teachers from Joseph Swan and Burnside Business and Enterprise College will be on hand to interview, as will artist Paul Merrick and Colin Shevills, Director of Balance. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact Matt Forster (details below).

North East parents back alcohol advertising ban

Two thirds of north easterners would support a ban on alcohol advertising before 9pm, according to research conducted by Balance, the North East Alcohol Office.

More than 1,000 adults across the region were asked their opinion on a range of alcohol related issues. In addition to resounding support for a watershed ban, almost half believe alcohol advertising targets under 18s.

And it would appear that parents’ concerns are well founded as evidence gathered by Newcastle University’s public health experts suggests that alcohol advertising does influence the region’s children and young people when it comes to making decisions around drinking.

The findings have been released during Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW) 2010 (Monday, October 18-24) which aims to raise awareness of young people’s alcohol use and the impact of parental drinking on children.

Colin Shevills, Director of Balance, said: “These figures clearly show that the effect of alcohol advertising on children and young people is of concern to parents and other adults across the region.

“A recent report by the British Medical Association stated that alcohol advertising and sponsorship affects the onset of drinking amongst young people as well as encouraging increased consumption. It also highlights the fact that the rest of Europe has much tighter regulations when it comes to alcohol advertising

“The Government cannot hope to compete with the £800m annual marketing spend of the alcohol industry, particularly in the current financial situation. Regulation must be used to address both the content and volume of alcohol advertising.”

Stephanie O’Neil, public health researcher at Newcastle University, has been investigating the impact of alcohol advertising on children and young people in the north east. She has interviewed 14 to 17-year-olds and is in the process of compiling a report.

She said: “I’ve been looking at the impact of alcohol price and marketing, as well as that of intrinsic influences, such as peers and parents, on young people’s drinking behaviour. In particular, I have been exploring whether alcohol advertising creates an environment where drinking is seen as normal. Young people interviewed in this piece of research were not explicitly conscious of advertising having a direct effect on their behaviour but then describe many instances where there are indirect effects. Also, young people tend to assume that advertising meant TV adverts and did not recognise other newer forms of media as having a promotional intent.”

In the run up to AAW, Balance has been working alongside BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and children between the ages of 9 and 11-years-old at Burnside Business and Enterprise College in Wallsend and Joseph Swan in Gateshead.

Artist Paul Merrick worked with the children earlier this month to identify levels of awareness around alcohol advertising and branding, as well as discussing attitudes towards and behaviour around alcohol. The children were encouraged to produce artworks based on their knowledge.

Paul has developed this work into a large scale piece and will be working with children from both schools to create a piece of action art marking AAW at BALTIC on Monday, October 18.

National charity Alcohol Concern will tomorrow (Tuesday, October 19) launch a report into alcohol marketing, with new statistics on the numbers of children affected. It reveals that more than a million children across the UK were subjected to alcohol advertising during England games at the World Cup in June this year. The report calls for a radical shake up of the advertising rules.
Notes to editors
Government research shows that 40% of 13 year olds and 58% of the 15 year olds who have drunk alcohol had experienced negative consequences, including having an argument or fight; visiting an A&E department, being admitted to hospital overnight or having an injury. Results from a survey published in December 2009 showed parents often fail to make the link between alcohol and risky behaviours.

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4. Balance AAW campaign materials

It’s a fact, 7 out of 10 parents have never been drunk in front of their children.

Kids copy, that’s how they learn from their parents. So if we show a responsible attitude towards alcohol they will too. Makes sense doesn’t it?

CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT DRINKING.
It’s a fact, 85% of parents have never bought alcohol for their children.

Kids copy, that’s how they learn from their parents. So if we show a responsible attitude towards alcohol they will too. Makes sense doesn’t it?

CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT DRINKING.
4. Balance AAW campaign materials

It’s a fact, 4 out of 5 agree adults should never drink too much alcohol in front of children.

Kids copy, that’s how they learn from their parents. So if we show a responsible attitude towards alcohol they will too. Makes sense doesn’t it?

CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT DRINKING.
There are a number of online resources available to support you in planning alcohol-related activity, particularly in relation to children and young people.

Although Balance is obviously not responsible for, or able to monitor the content of the following resources, here are some of the websites and documents we have found useful.

**General alcohol**
- [www.drinkaware.co.uk/resources](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/resources) – industry sponsored site, where you can access a range of materials to educate adults and young people about alcohol.
- [www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk) – website of the Scottish national charity for alcohol issues, providing training resources, leaflets and fact sheets.
- [www.downyourdrink.org.uk](http://www.downyourdrink.org.uk) – free and confidential website, designed to help you work out whether you’re drinking too much.
- [www.hopeuk.org](http://www.hopeuk.org) – a faith-based charity website, providing education and training for parents, churches and voluntary youth organisations.
- [www.hubcapp.org.uk](http://www.hubcapp.org.uk) – an online resource of local alcohol initiatives and evidence-based projects throughout England and Wales.
- [www.alcoholpolicy.net/young-people/](http://www.alcoholpolicy.net/young-people/) – blog-based website helping alcohol harm reduction specialists stay up to date with the latest developments.
- [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) – the official UK Government website, containing information about the ‘Why Let Drink Decide’ campaign.
- [www.ias.org.uk](http://www.ias.org.uk) – website providing academic information and fact sheets on alcohol related research and policy issues.

**Alcohol, children and young people**
- [www.cypnow.co.uk](http://www.cypnow.co.uk) – website providing daily news from the children and youth sector and resources for professionals working with children and young people.
- [www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com) – Australian website providing support and guidance around a range of youth-based issues, including alcohol.
- [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/mentalhealthandgrowingup/drugsandalcohol.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/mentalhealthandgrowingup/drugsandalcohol.aspx) – up to date, easy to read information on drugs and alcohol for young people, written by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

**Alcohol and families**
- [www.alcoholandfamilies.org.uk/](http://www.alcoholandfamilies.org.uk/) – website run by Alcohol Concern, dedicated to supporting professionals working with children and parents.
- [www.drinkaware.co.uk/talking-to-under-18s/parents](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/talking-to-under-18s/parents) – resource from DrinkAware, providing advice for parents on talking to children about alcohol.
- [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk) – resource providing information, support and helpline numbers for families of drug and alcohol users.
- [www.alcoholdrugsandfamilies.nhs.uk](http://www.alcoholdrugsandfamilies.nhs.uk) – an on-line self-help program offering support to family members whose relatives have an alcohol or drug problem.
- [www.keepthedoctoraway.co.uk/.../Alcohol,FamiliesTeenagers_377.html](http://www.keepthedoctoraway.co.uk/.../Alcohol,FamiliesTeenagers_377.html) – website exploring how your alcohol use affects your children.
5. Glossary of resources (For practitioners, schools, parents and young people)

Supporting alcohol education in schools

- www.alcoholandfamilies.org.uk/documents/T/teacher-tools_index.htm – dedicated part of the alcohol and families website, providing tools and guidance for teachers.

- www.talkaboutalcohol.com/AtSchool/location-9.aspx – a peer reviewed free website resource with over 500 pages of alcohol-focused ideas, lesson plans, quizzes and games for teachers, students and parents.

- www.northumbria.police.uk/ebeat/myres/teachers/alcohol/act2alcpoisres2/ – alcohol section of the North East young people’s advice and guidance portal from Northumbria Police.

Reports/guidance documents

- Young people’s drug and alcohol treatment at the crossroads – what it’s for, where it’s at and how to – Drugscope report considering the state of current provision for young people and young adults who need help for substance misuse problems www.drugscope.org.uk/ourwork/Policy-and-public-affairs/topics-and-campaigns/key-topics/Crossroads

- Institute of Alcohol Studies fact sheets:
  - Young people, alcohol and other drugs – international comparisons
  - Adolescents and alcohol
  - Alcohol – binge drinking.


- Safe, Sensible, Social - government alcohol strategy, setting out clear goals and actions to promote sensible drinking and reduce the harm that alcohol can cause. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PolicyAndGuidance/DH_075218


6. Why alcohol education is vital

Although statistics show that the number of young people drinking alcohol in the region is falling and that the majority of young people do not drink – those who choose to consume alcohol are doing so in greater quantities, with the following consequences:

- The North East is the region with the highest number of Year 10 pupils consuming seven or more units of alcohol in the last seven days.
- Research carried out in one of the North East’s 12 localities has revealed that more than six in ten Year 7 pupils and almost 9 in 10 Year 9 pupils had drunk alcohol.
- Several of our localities have some of the highest rates of under-18 alcohol-specific hospital admissions in the country - between 2005/06 and 2007/08, 2,047 under 18s in the North East were admitted to hospital for alcohol specific conditions such as alcohol poisoning.
- Evidence has shown that alcohol seriously impairs brain development in young people.

Alcohol education and prevention activity are key components in influencing some of the choices that young people make in relation to alcohol. By delivering evidence-based activity, we can encourage children and young people to reconsider their behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol and we can also minimise the risk amongst those young people who choose to drink. Alcohol education achieves this because:

- It equips children and young people with information and confidence to support good decision making. Research suggests that young people associate drinking with enhanced confidence and maturity, whereas, in fact, alcohol removes control and it can place young people in a variety of risky situations. A recent Government study showed that 40% of 13 year olds and 58% of 15 year olds who admitted to drinking alcohol had experienced negative consequences as a result. Alcohol education is vital in encouraging young people (and their parents) to consider the consequences of drinking alcohol such as; becoming a victim of crime; ending up in hospital; contracting an STD after unprotected sex; or being involved in a road accident.

- Teachers have influence. Earlier this year, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommended that alcohol education should become an integral part of the school curriculum. It highlighted the fact that teachers, alongside parents, have the major influence on young people’s decision-making processes and a central role in shaping the lives of the young people they come into contact with. Research has shown that almost seven in ten Year 7 pupils and almost nine in ten Year 9 pupils declared that teachers informed their decisions around alcohol and it is essential for schools to play a proactive, informed role in delivering alcohol education, ideally as part of the mainstream curriculum.

- It explodes misperceptions and ‘myths’ around alcohol. Research shows that young people perceive peer drinking to be more normal and frequent than is actually the case. For example, two thirds of Year 9 pupils surveyed during a local ‘social norms’ project, believed that the majority of their peers drank alcohol on a regular basis, whereas research showed that this perception did not mirror reality. Misguided beliefs can encourage young people to consume, or aspire to consume, alcohol. Exposing the myth can relieve the peer pressure to drink.
Worried about a parent?
• Are you worried about your parent’s drinking habits?
• Are you worried about how their behaviour changes when they’ve been drinking?
• Are you afraid of verbal or physical violence when your parent or another adult has been drinking?
• Do you feel you have to protect a person who doesn’t drink from verbal or physical violence when your parent has been drinking?
• Do you feel anxious, frustrated or depressed because of the effect of alcohol on your parents?

Caring for a Parent
Lots of people drink alcohol to change the way they feel and sometimes this can mean that they develop a problem with drink, so that:
• They can’t stop using drink.
• They act in a strange or scary way when they have used alcohol.
• You have to look after them when they use alcohol.

If you live in a home where drinking is a secret from people outside the home, it can feel like you:
• Are not sure what’s going on.
• Don’t know who to trust.
• Have lots of different feelings about what’s happening.

Your family can feel that way because:
• Adults and children can be scared about what will happen if they look for help.
• People in the family don’t always keep their promises or do what they say they will do.
• There are so many difficult feelings about the drinking that it seems easier to pretend everything is okay.

In spite of all of this, you need to know, that:
• You are not to blame for your parent’s drinking.
• You are not responsible for what happens when they drink.
• You can’t control their drinking.
• You can’t cure their drinking.
• There are people and organisations that can help you to deal with this.

You can get help and support for yourself at this difficult time. It can take some people a long time to get help with their drinking. When they get help, getting better can also take time. However long they take to get help, you can get help now:
• Talk to an adult about what’s going on. If you want to be sure that the person you talk to will not tell anyone else, talk to a helpline like ChildLine 0800 1111 - you don’t have to give them your name.
• If you are not in danger, youth workers, connexions workers or counsellors can usually keep what you say private.
• Social Workers can find help for your whole family. When your family member’s drink problem is not a secret anymore, it will be less scary to talk to people about it.
• It’s okay to have feelings about what is happening – you may feel scared, angry, stressed or guilty. If you have a young carers project in your area, you will be able to talk to a young carers worker who can understand what you are going through. You may be able to meet other young people who have similar problems in their families.
• If you want to find your nearest young carers project you can do so by looking at this website: www.youngcarer.com/showPage.php?file=projects.htm
• You can call The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACOA) on 0800 358 3456 just to talk. The helpline is staffed Monday, Tuesday, Friday: 10am-7pm, Wednesday, Thursday: 10am-9pm and Saturday: 10am-3pm when possible. You can also visit the website http://www.nacoa.org.uk/
• There is a group for young people called Alateen. The group runs meetings, like a club, and the young people there share tips on how to make their lives easier. Call 020 7403 0888 (available 10 am – 10 pm, 365 days a year) and ask for an Alateen meeting in your area or visit the website at www.al-anonuk.org.uk/alateen.php

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9. Social norms project implementation plan

Section I – Background

Foreword
A range of colleagues across the region have asked Balance for its support in developing alcohol-related social norms activity at a local level. As a result, the office has pulled together this step-by-step implementation plan, which we hope you will use to devise and roll-out social norms projects in your locality.

Balance would be very keen to work with you in the future, both to support this activity and to analyse some of the data you collect. Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you require any more information or advice about how to make the best use of this resource.

The office would like to extend its sincere thanks to colleagues in localities across the North East, who have already delivered ‘social norms’ projects and whose expertise and willingness to share their learning has enabled us to develop this resource.

Should I use this resource during Alcohol Awareness Week (AAW)?
Balance envisages that this resource will help you to develop and implement longer-term social norms projects at a local level. You may wish to use AAW as an opportunity to promote and secure buy-in for this work, but the social norms approach is a sustained behaviour change model, which should be seen as part of your mainstream prevention strategy.

Introduction
Alcohol is part of life for children and young people growing up in the North East. A recent national survey showed that children in this region drink alcohol at younger ages and in greater quantities than their peers anywhere else in the country. Similarly, the Local Alcohol Profiles for England, released in September 2010, showed that the North East has some of the highest rates of alcohol-specific hospital admissions amongst under-18s and tackling alcohol misuse amongst this age group is a major priority for partners across the region.

However, recent studies have shown the overall number of children and young people drinking alcohol has reduced since 1995. Similarly, social norms projects, carried out in several North East localities have indicated that the vast majority of young people aged 11-16 do not regularly drink alcohol, thereby challenging some of the stereotypes of young people in the region.

What are social norms?
The social norms approach has become one of the most talked about health promotion strategies in recent years. Known primarily for its application to college student drinking in America, it has become an increasingly popular topic amongst community and school-based substance misuse prevention specialists, who are looking for an evidence-based alternative to more mainstream prevention strategies. The growing appeal of social norms is due largely to two related issues. Firstly, many of the usual strategies to address problem behaviours in children and young people have had limited success, leading professionals to look for other options. Secondly, there is a growing movement in the prevention field towards implementation of evidence-based practice and the emerging data from social norms approaches is largely positive.

The term social norms refers to our perceptions of how our peers behave and research has shown that these perceptions strongly influence how we behave as individuals. At the same time, there is evidence to suggest that our perceptions are often inaccurate and we tend to assume that others behave in a less healthy and socially responsible manner than is actually the case. For example, studies in the North East have noted that school pupils overestimate how heavily and frequently their peers drink alcohol. Furthermore, this misperception can lead individuals to drink more alcohol themselves, in an attempt to match what they see as the group norm. These misperceptions have become the basis of an increasingly popular and widely used technique called the ‘social norms’ approach. ‘Social norms’ seeks to correct such misperceptions through the dissemination of information on the actual behaviour/attitudes of a particular population – for example:

- 9 out of 10 pupils in Year 10 in X school haven’t had an alcoholic drink in the last week
- 8 out of 10 pupils in Year 9 don’t think it’s cool to drink alcohol.

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BALANCE – Getting the measure of alcohol
Key features of social norms interventions
The social norms approach differs from traditional approaches to behaviour change in several ways:

- It does not use ‘health terrorism’ or similar techniques – i.e. it does not attempt to change behaviour by using depictions of negative consequences of behaviour (a technique that research increasingly suggests is ineffective, particularly amongst children and young people).
- It is a participatory process in which members of a population become actively involved in the collection of data.
- It does not involve any moral undertones, or directions to the target population about how they ‘should’ behave. It is instead based on the principle of presenting information about actual (healthy) norms of a target population back to that population.

The effectiveness of the social norms approach: background research
An increasing number of studies have shown that the social norms approach is an effective method of promoting health and reducing harm amongst enclosed populations, such as pupils in a particular school. Positive results have been documented in schools in the North East and a growing number of commissioners and practitioners have expressed an interest in developing and implementing their own social norms projects.

A review of relevant research literature indicates that a social norms approach is an appropriate strategy for targeting alcohol use amongst secondary school-age pupils. Various studies have shown that the overestimation of peer alcohol use is widespread among students of middle and high school age (Perkins & Craig 2003; Botvin et al 2001; D’Amico et al 2001; Sussman et al 1988; Thombs, Wolcott & Farkash 1997; Beck & Treiman 1996). Other research found that overestimation of peer use is a significant predictor of adolescent alcohol use and that adolescent onset of use can be significantly delayed by reducing misperceptions of alcohol use amongst peers (Haines, Barker & Rice 2003; Linkenbach and Perkins 2003; Perry et al 1992; Hansen & Graham 1991).

Why is it useful? Links with the ‘local needs assessment process’
Children and Young People’s Substance Misuse Commissioners are responsible for assessing the level and detail of need around substance misuse (including alcohol) in each locality. They are required to carry out an annual ‘Children and Young People’s Needs Assessment’, in order to ensure that appropriate services are available to meet the needs of the local population. In the past, information gathered via the ‘Tell Us’ survey would have supported the local needs assessment process. However, this research has been decommissioned and Balance believes that the development of social norms projects across the region would be extremely valuable in the context of local needs assessment.

The data produced via a social norms project could form a baseline in terms of gender, age and ward around the prevalence of alcohol use amongst the target population; similarly, comparing this data with the national and regional picture of prevalence would inform local understanding of the need for information, prevention and treatment services for this age group.
Section 2 – Preparation

As noted above, social norms interventions offer a new evidence-based approach to behaviour change. One of the appeals of the approach is that it is based on a simple and straightforward premise of realigning misguided perceptions and ‘nudging’ individuals to follow majority behaviour. As with any type of behaviour change strategy, delivery requires careful planning and an understanding of the principles involved.

This section provides guidance on the preparatory stage of a social norms project and suggests how to address some commonly encountered challenges. The information contained within this section is based on the experiences of commissioners and practitioners in the North East.

1 - Define the problem
The first step of a social norms project is to clearly define the issue you plan to address – such as frequency of alcohol consumption, the attitudes of young people towards drinking, or the negative consequences experienced after drinking. It is important that these target behaviours can be translated into an achievable goal – for example a reduction in the frequency of alcohol consumption, or the development of a culture in which it is ‘cool’ for young people not to drink alcohol.

2 - Understand the population and choose your target audience
The social norms approach was originally developed in the American college systems and the majority of projects have taken place in colleges, schools or universities, including schools across the North East. Projects conducted in ‘closed’ settings such as these benefit from having a clearly defined target audience (i.e. a particular year group or school group), in which pupils can be reached via several established channels, such as PSHE lessons.

Social norms projects have been delivered with several levels of target audience in this region, from a single year group in an individual school, to all year groups across the entire secondary school system. Depending on the availability of resources in your locality, you could choose one of the following options:

- A pilot social norms study, with a single school in your locality.
- A pilot social norms study, with a single year group across several schools in your locality.
- A comparison social norms study, looking at a sample of schools in your locality (e.g. comparing schools in affluent areas with those in less affluent wards).
- A full, locality-wide social norms survey of all secondary school children in Years 7-11.

3 - Ethics/Consent
Since a social norms project would be conducted on school premises amongst under-18s, it is important to establish consent / agreement from the following:

- Director of Children’s Services.
- Any other key agencies / individuals in your locality (e.g. the Local Education Authority if appropriate).
- Individual Head teachers from participating schools.
- Parents – who should receive letters allowing them to ‘opt out’ (see example letter at Appendix 2).
- Individual young people – who should be given the opportunity of declining to participate.

In other localities in the North East, Research and Development Departments have classed this survey as exempt from research governance or NHS ethics approval, as it falls under the remit of service development – though it might be worth double-checking this in your own area, as practice and procedures vary from locality to locality.

4 - Involve and reassure stakeholders
It is important to acknowledge that key partners in your locality might not be familiar with a social norms approach and with this in mind they might have questions or concerns about the work. For example, experience in the North East has shown that it is essential to sell the concept of social norms to target schools and to reassure them that the project has positive benefits for pupils, without any risk of negative publicity. The information collected in every social norms site should be de-personalised and confidential and the school should only use messages that it is happy to disseminate amongst its pupils.
When preparing to deliver a school-based project, you could consult a range of interested partners, including parents, head-teachers, teachers, governors, local youth clubs and health educators, to outline the social norms approach and address any queries. The ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ section (attached at Appendix 1) includes information about some of the issues you might encounter.

5 - Confidentiality
In a social norms study, no individual young person should be identified from the data. The purpose of the data is to inform planning and to change behaviour from a population-wide perspective - therefore at no time is it either appropriate or necessary to have any named individual or specific postcode/address information.
9. Social norms project implementation plan

Section 3 – Suggested Methodology

1 - Introduction
Data collected during the course of your social norms project will be the basis for creating the social norms messages. If messages are to be credible it is vital that the data collection is conducted in a comprehensive, transparent way and that you minimise the potential for any bias (for example, pupils consulting each other about answers).

Experience from projects in the North East has shown that ideally, you should try to abide by the following principles when you are delivering your social norms project (though there is scope for flexibility, depending on the level and type of resources available in your locality):

Route of delivery
- Arrangements should be made to deliver the project with your target audience (i.e. specific schools / year groups).
- Ideally, you should arrange to deliver the survey to an entire school (i.e. all of the year groups taking part in the project) in a single day. This minimises the possibility that questionnaire responses are influenced by discussion amongst classes.
- The survey should be introduced (please see suggested delivery speech at Appendix 3) by trained or informed staff, such as local Drug and Alcohol Education Officers, PSHE teachers, pastoral leads, school nurses, Children’s Services Locality Co-ordinators etc.
- Individual schools may wish to make their own arrangements, but experience has shown that it is effective to deliver the survey during PSHE or IT lessons, to align this work with the wider education process.
- The survey should also be delivered under exam-style conditions, to ensure that pupils do not have the opportunity to confer over their answers.

Mode of delivery
- Ideally, the questionnaire should be web-based, meaning that pupils would need to have access to IT equipment and the internet.
- A web-based survey is preferable in that it allows for total anonymity; it avoids the need for any data input requirements; and it enables immediate access to basic statistical data per school. (To arrange for a web-based social norms survey to be delivered, you would have to work with your local IT provider to develop a secure microsite, containing all of the relevant questions and capacity to store data from all respondents in your locality).
- Alternatively, you could deliver a paper-based version of the survey, asking pupils to fill in the questionnaire and storing completed copies in sealed envelopes, to ensure confidentiality.

NB. The selection and wording of questions should be supported by evidence-based guidance (as is the case in the example questionnaire attached at ANNEX A).

2 - Delivery process
The process for delivery of the social norms project has been suggested as follows:

1. A short talk should be given to each group of young people, explaining the purpose of the survey, how the data will be used, that the information is anonymous and that they can refuse to take part if they wish (Appendix 3 – Delivery Speech).

2. Pupils from each year group should be invited to complete the survey during PSHE lessons, ideally via a web-based questionnaire (or a paper-based alternative if IT equipment is not available) – the mode of questionnaire completion should be agreed in advance with each school.

3. a) If the questionnaire is web-based, the data will be collated automatically and completed surveys can be analysed immediately by a relevant analyst in the DAAT, or the local authority.
   b) If the questionnaire is paper-based, the responses should be sealed into envelopes and delivered directly to the relevant analyst, with identification of the school only (NB. This means that the analyst will also need to input the data, before analysing it).
9. Social norms project implementation plan

4. The Young People’s Substance Misuse Team could be made available to support a drop-in facility at the school, within 24-48 hours of the survey, to ensure that any young people experiencing issues raised by the survey can contact them and be dealt with appropriately.

5. Generic, anonymised reports should be produced for relevant local partnerships (such as the Children’s Board, Children and Young People’s Commissioning Groups, the Safeguarding Children’s Board etc).

6. More detailed reports should be produced for each school taking part in the process, including information about levels and patterns of alcohol consumption, perceptions about alcohol use amongst peer groups and pupils’ core values about alcohol. These reports should be confidential and for the use of each target school only.

7. Balance will be happy to support you in generating suitable positive ‘social norms’ messages for each participating school and for local release to the media as appropriate.

8. You should work with schools involved in the project to determine next steps – for example, is there any evidence to suggest that you should carry out focused work with a particular year group, or an individual school?

9. Likewise, you should work in partnership with the schools to decide how to disseminate positive messages in relation to alcohol – for example, a poster campaign to demonstrate “9 out of 10 pupils in Year 10 in school X have not drunk alcohol in the past week”.
## Section 4 – Implementation checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Lead Agency/Individual</th>
<th>Completed (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Defining the problem – have you decided which behaviour(s) you are trying to address?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have you chosen your target audience?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Have you received approval / consent from the following:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Director of Children’s Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Individual Head teachers from participating schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Individual young people – who should be given the opportunity of declining to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Any other relevant partners in your locality</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Have you consulted and reassured a wide range of interested parties (parents, teachers, youth groups etc)?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you decided how the questionnaire will be delivered (e.g. via a web-based survey, paper-based survey etc) and developed a suitable process to do this?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have you identified an appropriate individual to facilitate delivery of the questionnaire?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Have you agreed a date, timetable and mechanism for delivery (e.g. an entire year group via a PSHE lesson / IT lesson)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Have you identified a secure means of collecting the data? (e.g. via a secure website if the questionnaire is web-based, or via sealed envelopes if the questionnaire is paper-based)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have you got access to an analyst to support you in collating and interpreting the data?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 9. Social norms project implementation plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Lead Agency/Individual</th>
<th>Completed (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-up</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you made arrangements for the local CYP substance misuse team to be available for follow-up support work (if you think this is appropriate)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have you produced generic reports for relevant local partnerships (such as the Children’s Board, Children and Young People’s Commissioning Groups)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Have you produced more detailed reports for each school taking part in the process, including information about: • levels and patterns of alcohol consumption; • perceptions about alcohol use amongst peer groups; and • Pupils’ core values about alcohol?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Have you contacted and worked with Balance to develop suitable positive messages for each participating school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have you worked with the schools involved to decide how to fund and disseminate these positive messages in relation to alcohol?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Have you worked with the schools involved in the project to determine next steps – for example, have you agreed to carry out focused work with a particular year group, or an individual school if the evidence suggests that this is necessary?</td>
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ANNEX A - Example questionnaire

The following survey will help us to design and deliver better services for you and the completion of the survey is completely voluntary. There are no right or wrong answers and if you are unsure, then please mark the answer that comes closest to your own experience.

Your answers will be kept safely and no one will be able to identify your responses in any of the reports we produce.

- Most of the questions are about what you do as a young person.
- Please don’t exaggerate or feel that you need to hide anything.
- Answer honestly and fully.
- Towards the end of the survey, there are also questions about what you think other young people are doing. Think carefully about not just your own friends or class-mates but about all young people of your age.

First of all, some questions about you [the answers will not identify you]

1. What school year are you in?
2. How old are you?
3. Are you Male [ ] Female [ ]
4. What ethnic group do you belong to?

The next questions are about if and when you drink alcohol (if at all) and the effects it may have on your life — remember no-one will know who has filled in this form, so please answer honestly:

For this questionnaire, drinks are measured as:

1. Have you ever had a drink of alcohol (at least one standard drink, not just a few sips) in your lifetime?
   Y / N

2. If you have ever had a drink of alcohol how old were you when you had your first full drink?
   - 9 years old or less
   - 10 years old
   - 11 years old
   - 12 years old
   - 13 years old
   - 14 years old
   - 15 years old
   - 16 years or older

3. Have you drunk alcohol in the last week?
   Y / N

4. If you did drink in the last week, how many standard drinks did you have overall?
   - 0
   - 1-2
   - 3-5
   - 6-9
   - 10-19
   - 20-39
   - 40+

5. If you drank in the last year how often did you have an alcoholic drink?
   - Never
   - Less than monthly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily or almost daily

One Standard Drink is:

- Half pint of regular beer, lager or cider
- 1 small glass of wine
- 1 single measure of spirits
- 1 small glass of sherry
- 1 single measure of aperitifs

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6. On the days you were drinking, how many standard drinks did you have?
   - 1-2
   - 3-4
   - 5-6
   - 7-9
   - 10+

7. If you drank alcohol in the last year, what did you drink (please tick all which apply)?
   - Beer / Ale / Lager
   - Cider
   - Alco pops
   - Wine
   - Spirits

8. If you do/did drink in the last year, how often have you had 6 or more standard drinks on one occasion?
   - Never
   - Less than monthly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily or almost daily

9. If you do/did drink, have you ever been drunk – for example, staggered when walking, not being able to speak properly, throwing up or not remembering what happened? Y / N

10. If ever, how old were you when you first got drunk from alcohol?
    - Never
    - 9 years old or less
    - 10 years old
    - 11 years old
    - 12 years old
    - 13 years old
    - 14 years old
    - 15 years old
    - 16 years or older

11. Have you been drunk in the last week? Y / N

12. If you ever drink alcohol, where do you mostly get your alcohol from?
    - Friends
    - Parents
    - Other family
    - Local shops
    - Contraband – tab / booze houses
    - Pubs / bars / clubs
    - Other (please say where)

13. After drinking have you ever had:
    - A physical fight? Y / N
    - An accident or injury? Y / N
    - Serious problems with parents? Y / N
    - Serious problems with boyfriends / girlfriends? Y / N
    - Serious problems with friends? Y / N
    - Sex (for years 10 & 11 only)? Y / N
    - Performed poorly at school? Y / N
    - Victim of robbery or theft? Y / N
    - Trouble with the police? Y / N
    - Admitted to hospital or attended A&E? Y / N

14. If any, how many young people your age in X (e.g. Darlington, South Tyneside, Newcastle etc) do you think drank alcohol over the last 7 days? (see scale below)

15. If any, how many young people your age in X do you think have been drunk in the last 7 days? (see scale below)

16. “It’s not ok for young people my age to get drunk” – what do you think of this statement? Do you:
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
Appendix I – Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do we know that this approach is appropriate for schools and young people in my locality?
The social norms approach was originally developed in the American college system and it focused primarily on alcohol and drug use in student populations. It has subsequently been used amongst school-aged populations and in recent years, colleagues have delivered several social norms projects in the North East. An increasing number of studies have shown that the social norms approach is an effective method of promoting health and reducing harm amongst enclosed populations, such as pupils in a particular school. Positive results have been documented in schools in the North East and a growing number of commissioners and practitioners have expressed an interest in developing and implementing their own social norms projects.

2. How do you know that people are being honest in the surveys?
As is often the case when assessment relies on self-reporting, it is likely that there will be a degree of inaccuracy. Such inaccuracies could be as a result of respondents incorrectly recalling their behaviour or providing answers that they perceive to be more socially acceptable. At the same time, research in the alcohol field suggests that individuals tend to be far more honest when answering survey questions, particularly when the respondent is confident that their answers are anonymous and confidential.

3. What if there are no misperceptions of the behaviour?
Normative misperceptions have been documented in a wide range of behaviours, although it should not be assumed that misperceptions will be evident in every type of behaviour or amongst every population. This is why it is important to research your target audience before you implement your main campaign.

4. What if the norms are unhealthy?
It is inevitable that, in some instances, the norm of a particular population will be unhealthy. However, this does not mean that a social norms approach should not be used. Even if the norm of one aspect of behaviour is unhealthy, it is possible that alternative norms messages can be adopted, which focus on other aspects of that behaviour (for example, using a frequency of alcohol consumption norms message, rather than an attitude towards alcohol message). Each school will have a central role in agreeing the messages which will be disseminated to the target population, meaning that they can highlight positive messages, rather than any negative trends.

5. What if the norms encourage unhealthy or socially irresponsible behaviour?
Stakeholders may be concerned about the potential for a social norms message to have unintended consequences for those who already behave healthily. For example, pupils who do not drink alcohol may feel pressurised to do so if they see a social norms message about the frequency of alcohol use amongst their peers. There is currently no evidence to suggest that norms messages have this kind of unintentional effect.

6. How do you overcome any concerns about working with school-aged children?
There can be challenges in applying the social norms approach to populations of young people, particularly when the behaviours and attitudes being addressed include subject such as alcohol or sexual health. Parents or other partners may object to social norms messages being disseminated to young people, particularly if the messages refer to behaviours that are illegal for young adults. It is therefore important to involve key partners from the beginning of the process, to allow any concerns to be identified and addressed.
Appendix 2 – Example letter from headteachers to parents

Dear Parent,

Survey re drug and alcohol related behaviour

Our school has been invited to take part in a very important survey being conducted by the local Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) / Children’s Services Department in the local authority, which will look at our pupils’ attitudes and behaviour in relation to alcohol.

We have agreed to support this work as we will benefit from a better understanding of the true nature of alcohol use amongst our young people and it will also give us the opportunity to disseminate some positive messages and education about alcohol in the future. This information will be used by the DAAT / Children’s Services to ensure that appropriate services, information and advice are all made available to support healthy choices amongst our pupils.

The school finds the content of the questionnaire acceptable and it is anonymous and confidential - no pupil will be identified at any stage of the questionnaire process. We hold a copy of the questionnaire in the school office and if you would like to examine it, you are more than welcome to do so.

I hope you will agree that it is important for our pupils to take part in this exercise. I will assume that you approve unless I hear otherwise and I look forward to sharing the results with you in the future. The survey will be carried out on ..............

Yours sincerely
9. Social norms project implementation plan

Appendix 3 – Suggested delivery speech

Young people drug and alcohol survey
The Children and Young People’s Substance Misuse Commissioning Team aims to provide support and education and to improve treatment for young people in relation to drugs and alcohol.

Each year, the team receives money from the Government in order to deliver the best possible range of services in this area. So that we can spend the money effectively, it is essential to try and understand what kind of services young people want and need.

What is this survey trying to do?
This survey aims to gather the information about what young people need in relation to alcohol. If our team has this information then it can look at what is currently being provided and make any changes to meet your needs in the best way possible.

We will be asking all year 7-11 secondary school young people across this area about their alcohol use. At the same time, we want to help young people who are thinking about using alcohol and who are planning to make decisions based on what they believe their friends or school mates are doing. So we will also be asking young people about what they think their friends or school mates are drinking too. We will then be able to use this in future information campaigns to disseminate positive messages to pupils, parents and staff about alcohol (for example, the majority of young people in this school do not drink alcohol regularly).

Confidentiality and anonymity
Remember only our small team will see individual surveys which will be anonymous and only identifiable by school and age – no names or addresses are asked for or required.

- Most of the questions are about what you do as a young person.
- Please do not exaggerate or feel you need to hide anything.
- Answer all questions honestly and fully.
- There are also questions about what you think other young people do in relation to alcohol; think carefully about not just your own friends or classmates but about all young people.

Your parents have been sent a letter explaining what we are trying to do and whilst this is not compulsory, we hope you will support us in making your opinions known.

Thank you
Appendix 4 – Acknowledgements and references

Balance would like to extend its sincere thanks to colleagues from Darlington Drug & Alcohol Action Team, who have been instrumental in supporting the development of this Social Norms Project Implementation Plan.

Balance has also consulted the following documents in producing this work:

In order to commission, develop and implement a ‘social norms’ project within your locality, you will obviously evaluate potential costs against the benefits.

As demonstrated in Section 1 of the Project Implementation Plan, an increasing number of studies have shown that the social norms approach is an effective method of promoting health and reducing harm amongst enclosed populations, such as pupils in a particular school. Studies in this region have already shown promising signs in relation to behaviour change and the evidence suggests that the social norms approach has a much more positive impact upon pupils than more traditional prevention/educational activity.

Developing a ‘social norms’ project would also support the local needs assessment process, providing insight into the behaviour, perceptions and attitudes of a broad cross-section of young people in your locality. It would have the potential to repeat the data-collection process on a regular and routine basis.

These are clearly compelling benefits, though as far as costs are concerned, developing and promoting a social norms approach can be time consuming, particularly at the outset. For example, as noted in Section 2 of the Project Implementation Plan, it is extremely important to secure buy-in from a variety of partners, such as head teachers and children’s services and this can be a relatively demanding process. In financial terms, there are the costs of devising a suitable data collection/processing mechanism and of developing techniques for disseminating key messages. At the same time, Balance is committed to supporting you in rolling out this work and the office would be happy to explore the following initiatives.

**How can Balance support you?**

- If there is sufficient interest and support for delivering ‘social norms’ activity at a local level, Balance would like to work with you to develop an internet-based data-collection/storage mechanism. This could then be used by local partners across the North East, removing the need to devise and fund your own data collection mechanism.
- Balance would be interested in carrying out some regional data-analysis, to provide a better understanding of attitudes and behaviour across the North East and comparison data for localities involved in this work.
- The office could support you in developing some of the key messages coming out of your work, to ensure consistency with other messages around alcohol and using an evidence-based approach to encourage greater effectiveness.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN UNDER-TAKING A SOCIAL NORMS PROJECT IN YOUR LOCALITY, PLEASE CONTACT BALANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, TO DISCUSS HOW THE OFFICE MIGHT SUPPORT YOU IN DOING SO.**