

Alcohol Awareness Project - Billingham

Introduction to the Project

The updated version of the National Alcohol Strategy; Safe. Sensible. Social 2007 sets out clear aims for tackling young people and their current drinking habits.

- Delay the onset of regular drinking primarily by changing the attitudes of 11-15 yr olds and their parents about alcohol
- Reduce harm to young people who have already started drinking
- Create a culture in which young people feel that they can have fun without needing a drink

The PCT North Tees commissioned this piece of work to establish the drinking patterns of young people in Billingham; this was partly in response to community concern around visual displays of binge drinking by young people in public areas.

Aims of the project were:

- Engage young people in the Billingham area on their terms, during the periods when alcohol is most likely to be consumed.
- Produce a teaching/training toolkit in partnership with and owned by young people which can be utilised in a Secondary School and/or a Further Education setting
- The above toolkit should be piloted in at least one setting
- Produce evidence of strategies which can be used with young people and examples of when/where these were effective
- Ensure young people, who engage over the lifetime of the project, are linked into developments within the Billingham area, specifically the Youth Café development.
- Provide a summary report detailing all of the above outcomes

Methodology

Research

Background information was collated by talking to the key stakeholders in the Billingham area, this including the youth service, voluntary agencies, housing and the police. The hotspot areas were identified by the stake holders and were visited by key working staff from STASH. The areas were targeted on various nights of the week, during early evening where 200 young people completed a questionnaire and spoke about their views on alcohol.

The original questionnaire was developed using the project aims as a guide and piloted with a sample group of young people to evaluate the quality of the answers. Some alterations were made, once the focus group agreed that they were happy, the final copy was used within the research.(see appendix A)

The surveys were completed anonymously, with the help of the key workers from the STASH project.

As the survey respondents were young people who were most likely to be drinking, the results are not intended to represent all the young people of the population, it is designed to show the trends among young people who are already engaged in regular drinking.

Toolkit development

Seven young people were involved within the development of the toolkit; these were existing clients and their friends. These young people live in the Billingham area and are regular drinkers. The young people shared what previous education they had received around alcohol and in particular what they liked and thought worked well, which was used as a base line to evaluate the tool kit and its contents.

The focus group met on 10 occasions and completed a peer education program on alcohol. They also helped to evaluate the information on the web based tool kit. This was done using various methods including group discussions, questionnaires, practical demonstrations, individual one to one sessions and written evaluation sheets.

The group also compared other alcohol tool kits, and advised the parts they liked best. The idea of having the toolkit web based was shared and critiqued by the group. The toolkit session plans and contents were mirrored by the peer education programme completed by each young person; therefore the contents of each session were evaluated in turn, and suggestions made for improvement.

The “Think Before You Drink” DVD clip was shown to various groups of young people who shared their views on the use of this within one of the sessions.

The focus groups and individuals recommended:

- The internet was the most popular medium used as a reference source by young people, therefore they liked the idea that the tool kit was web based.
- Alcohol education in school was varied, but always delivered by a teacher which made it difficult to disclose any problem drinking or drug taking.
- The education around alcohol and drugs was health based and did not look at the culture or attitudes to drinking.
- The web base tool kit site should be divided into young people specific pages which could be accessed via a password to store all the young peoples work.
- The tool kit should include a unit calculator
- The group enjoyed the “Frank” leaflets and pictures

Pilot in the school setting

The pilot of the toolkit took place in Billingham Campus School, unfortunately due to the timing of the project they were unable to see the finished web based tool. However the contents of the sessions were presented to a group of young people who had the opportunity to share their opinion onto what would make a successful alcohol education session. They enjoyed:

- The format and contents of the individual sessions
- The web based tool kit idea

Pilot of the website

Once the website was near completion a group of young people were given the opportunity to look at the site and give their feedback, this was passed onto the site developers to make any necessary changes. The feed back included:

- “Good but the writing is a bit too small and hard to see”
- “Would be better if you could listen to music when doing the quizzes”
- “Would like a print out of the answers”
- “Would like audio of questions due to reading difficulty”
- “Very pleased that work they had input into was on site and could help other people”

Summary of findings

- Young people are drinking high levels of alcohol and some at a very young age
- The alcohol is often provided by older family members including parents
- Drinking does occur in outdoor areas, this is often managed very well by the neighbourhood police initiatives
- Drinking is an issue for both males and females
- Drinking leads to other risk taking behaviour including having sex, taking drugs and becoming violent
- The issues around drinking changes depending where the alcohol is consumed
- The post code has no bearing on the level of alcohol drank
- Most young people have had some education around alcohol, but there opinion on the quality of the education had no impact on the level of alcohol that they drank

Discussion

Alcohol continues to damage the lives of many young people across the UK. Official figures appear to show young people drinking less overall since 2001, however those young people who are drinking are doing so earlier and at dangerously high levels, placing them at risk of unprotected sex and offending. This has been characterized as “more alcohol going down fewer throats.” The average amount of alcohol consumed per week by 11-15 year olds who drink regularly doubled from 5.3 units in 1990 to 11.4 units in 2006.

Drinking on a weekend and associating drinking with having a good time, came out of many discussions with the young people, this mirrors the national trend that the majority of drinking happens on a weekend.

During consultation with the key stakeholders, parts of Billingham were identified as Hot Spot areas for youths congregating and drinking. Namely:

John Whitehead Park
Area around the Billingham Forum on a Friday evening
Billingham Beck
Northfield School
Kings Arms Path leading up to School
Golf course behind St Columbus Road

These areas were visited by the project team and 200 young people were spoken to about their drinking habits. (see appendix 1)

The researchers did not find evidence of high levels of drinking in all of these locations. The young people informed the researchers that the police moved them on and that because of the high police presence they no longer drank in those places. John Whitehead park when identified as an area where the young people did not feel they could drink alcohol without receiving police attention.

Through discussion with the Neighbourhood Policing team, it was confirmed that the initiative used has proved to be effective in many of these areas and the police have reduced the amount of youths congregating and encouraged them to utilise green areas away from housing estates and the town centre area. This theme was reiterated by many of the young people who were interviewed, who felt that the police in Billingham restricted where they were allowed to gather. The high police presence was also noted by the researchers especially on a weekend.

What was highlighted by all involved within the research was that youths tended to drink more on a weekend than during the week days, and that sporting facilities such as the MUGGA at the Clarence's and at Billingham were utilised for sports throughout the week, but for drinking on a Friday and

Saturday nights. This highlights the need for alternative “let your hair down” activities to attract the youths at a weekend. The questionnaires confirmed that young people associate drinking with fun and party, and many expect to feel that atmosphere each and every weekend. This is reiterated by the national picture which indicated that 85% of regular drinkers do so on a weekend.

Males were highlighted as drinking more than females, with the average age of the young person drinking the most amounts of alcohol being 14 years and over. They were drinking on 3 or more occasions per week. The alcoholic drink of choice was beer or lager, closely followed by spirits. Young people did not have any issues in buying the alcohol as many of them were supplied by family members or older friends.

The questionnaires confirmed that although there is some drinking taking place outside, the young people who drink most regularly do so inside. This then leads to other risk taking behaviours which the police or community wardens are unable to monitor or control. The high level of sexual activity and drug taking while under the influence of alcohol can be directly linked to those young people who are the biggest drinkers and who drink indoors with friends. (See Appendix C). This contradicts the national picture of drinking outdoors, with the links to anti social behaviour and crime. The research indicates that this is due to the success of the neighbourhood police initiatives, which has moved the young people off the streets but does not necessarily tackle the issues of the levels of drinking.

Recommendations

Alcohol education must be delivered to all young people

The clear links between alcohol and other risk taking behaviour needs to be quantified, understood by those working with young people, parents and addressed within alcohol education

Some young people will show signs of risk taking behaviour and will require additional support and education; this could be delivered through peer education and referral to the appropriate substance misuse service early by those who work with young people

Parents need educating about alcohol and their children, this should encourage parents not to buy alcohol for their children and understand the other risk taking behaviour which alcohol contributes too

Police initiatives to control public drinking and reduce anti social behaviour should include preventative messages and work jointly with youth services

Sporting and recreational activities need to be targeted and tailored to the young people, and be available at appropriate time

Young people should be encouraged to seek natural highs from adventurous activities

Product/person/place needs further analysis locally, as the Neighbourhood police initiatives appear to be having some success in moving young people from the streets through enforcement, but this alone is not discouraging a reduction in drinking behaviour

Further research and understanding to young peoples first experience of alcohol, there parents attitudes to drinking and triggers would provide a evidence based approach to intervention and prevention

Appendix A

ALCOHOL SURVEY
MALE FEMALE AGE __ POSTCODE _____

How often do you drink in a week?

- 1 or 2 days per week 5 or 6 days per week
3 or 4 days per week Daily

What is your preferred alcohol drink?

- Beer / Cider Alco Pops
Spirits Other _____

3. Where do you drink? _____

Who do you drink with?

- Self With Family
With Friends Other _____

How do you get your alcohol?

- Buy it myself Family or Parents
Older Friends Other _____

6. Do your parents know that you drink? Yes No

7. Why do you drink? _____

What activity would stop or reduce your drinking?

- Sports Hobbies
Youth Club Other _____

When you drink have you ever?

- Had Sex Taken Drugs
Became Violent Argued with parents
Taken Risks Other _____

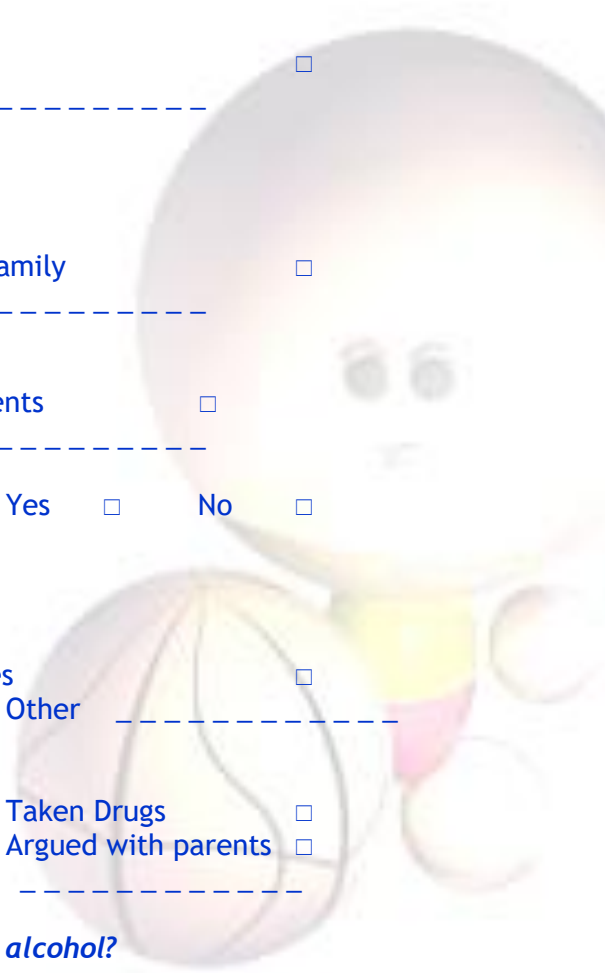
Have you ever missed school or been sent home due to alcohol?

- Yes No

11. Have you been taught anything about alcohol at School?

- Yes No

12. If Yes, was it: Good Fair Poor



Appendix B - Survey results

The following results represent that of the 200 young people who are interviewed in various locations in Billingham during the months of May, June and July 2008. All young people were advised who the researcher was, the Project represented and given information about STASH. Those young people who advised high levels of drinking were given further harm minimisation advice and sign posted into treatment.

Male	Female
88	112
44%	56%

Age	Total
10	3
11	0
12	7
13	28
14	55
15	53
16	26
17	24
18+	4
TOTAL	200

Q1, How often do you drink in a week?

1 or 2 days per week	126	63%
3 or 4 days per week	35	18%
5 or 6 days per week	11	6%
Don't drink much	4	2%
Don't drink	16	8%
Occasionally	4	2%
On a monthly basis	2	1%
Not Answered	2	1%
TOTAL	200	100%

A total of 87% of young people we spoke to drank at least on one occasion per week. However, as the project suggested we only spoke to young people who were in the localities of the Hot Spot area, so it would be expected that we would have a high ratio of drinkers who responded. It should be remembered that a vast majority of young people do not frequent these places or drink to such an excessive amount.

Q2, What is your preferred alcohol drink?

Alco Pops	18	9%
All Types	3	2%
Beer / Cider	103	52%
Beer / Cider & Spirits	23	12%
Beer / Cider & Alco Pops	8	4%
Cider	3	2%
Spirits	26	13%
Not answered	16	8%
TOTAL	200	100%

Beer and Cider appear to be the preferred choice of 70% of the young people questioned. It is also interesting that the young people preferred spirits that Alco pops. [The national survey on young peoples drinking habits \(smoking, drinking and drug use amongst young people in England 2006\)](#) found that beer, larger, cider and wine more popular than spirits.

Q3, Where do you drink?

Anywhere / Everywhere	45	23%
At Parties	7	4%
Billingham Park	2	1%
Fields	11	6%
Friends Houses / Peoples Houses	21	11%
Home	41	21%
Not answered / Don't Drink	36	18%
On The Streets	18	9%
Other Places	11	6%
Pub	4	2%
With Family	4	2%
TOTAL	200	100%

This question would suggest that most drinking does occur indoors as only 39% of young people admitting to drinking out side in various locations in Billingham. But when taking into account the anywhere and everywhere response, 67% indicated that they drink indoors. However a lot of young people chose not the answer this question directly, this could have been due to the time and locations of the questionnaire process.

Q4, Who do you drink with?

Self	4	2%
Self & with Friends	4	2%
Self, with Friends & Family	6	3%
With Family	12	6%
With Friends	140	70%
With Friends & Family	18	9%
Not answered	12	6%
Other - Everyone	4	2%
TOTAL	200	100%

As expected most young people are drinking in groups with their friends.

Q5, How do you get your alcohol?

Buy it Myself	35	18%
Buy it myself / Family or Parents	2	1%
Buy it myself, Older friends, Friends & Family	2	1%
Family or Parents	44	22%
Get people to join in	2	1%
Not answered	8	4%
Older Friends	81	41%
Older Friends & Family or parents	17	9%
Random People	9	5%
TOTAL	200	100%

33 % of young people mentioned that family or parents were involved in the purchasing of their alcohol, and an even higher amount advised that older friends buy on their behalf. The young people did not see the purchasing of the alcohol as an issue or barrier to their dinking.

Q6, Do your parents know that you drink?

No	36	18%
Yes	148	74%
N/A - Don't Drink	16	8%
TOTAL	200	100%

As the question above suggests, most parents are aware that their child is drinking.

Q7, Why do you drink?

Because I Like it/Want to	15	8%
Boredom	12	6%
Cause I can	10	5%
Calms me down/Chill Out/Relaxing	11	6%
Fun	35	18%
To Celebrate/Be Social/Occasions	30	15%
Don't Drink	2	1%
Don't Know	21	11%
For a Laugh	10	5%
Friends do/Laugh with Mates	12	6%
Not answered	40	20%
To block things out	2	1%
TOTAL	200	100%

It was hard to judge the response to this question; most drinking habits were associated with having fun with their friends. Again a large number of young people declined to answer this question.

Q8, What activity would stop or reduce your drinking?

Dancing & Ice Skating	4	2%
Don't know	8	4%
Going out with mates	2	1%
Hobbies	34	17%
Not Answered/None	48	24%
Sports	50	25%
Sports & Hobbies	4	2%
Sports & Youth Clubs	17	9%
Sports, Youth clubs & Hobbies	11	6%
Youth Clubs	22	11%
TOTAL	200	100%

The young people identified a large number of hobbies, and sports activities they would like to attend in place of drinking. However, these activities are all on offer within Billingham. Again an amount of young people did not want to respond to this question.

Q9, When you drink have you ever?

Had Sex	83	42%
Taken Drugs	45	23%
Became Violent	76	38%
Argued with parents	71	36%
Taken Risks	71	36%
Other (Fun, Fell Over, argued with Boyfriend, Acted Hyper, Acted Childish)	14	7%
None	67	34%

% out of 200

This question highlights the other risk taking behavior which occurs when the young people are drinking.

Q10, Have you ever missed school or been sent home due to alcohol?

No	173	87%
Yes	27	14%
TOTAL	200	100%

Q11, Have you ever been taught anything about alcohol at School?

No	42	21%
Yes	158	79%
TOTAL	200	100%

Q12, If Yes, Was it:

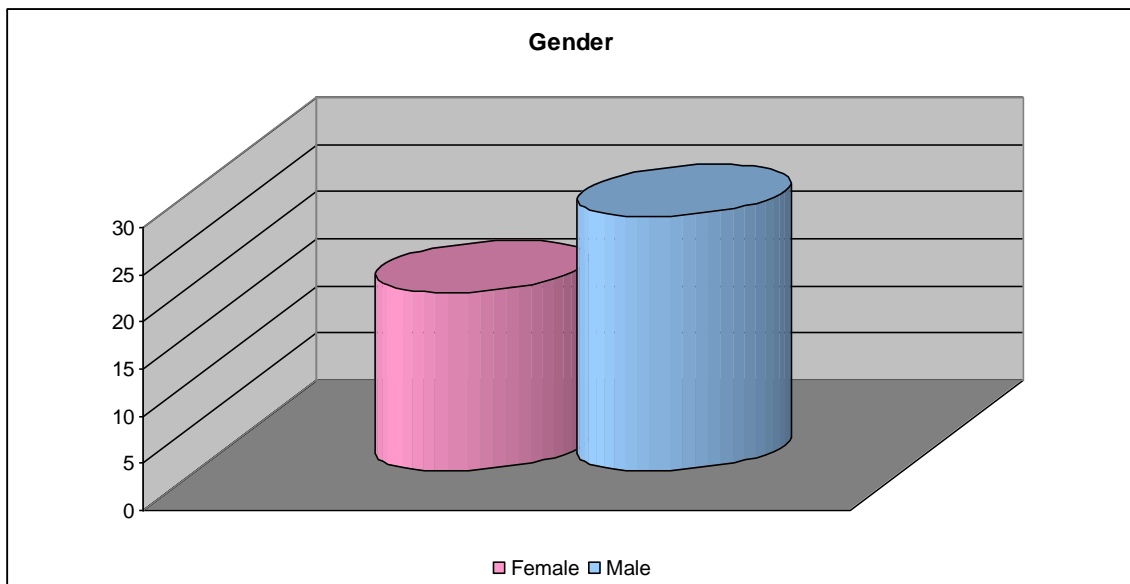
Good	66	33%
Fair	79	40%
Poor	31	16%
Not answered	24	12%
TOTAL	200	100%

The vast majority of young people have had some education around alcohol, and thought the quality was either good or fair. However this does not seem to have had an impact on the drinking patterns of those young people.

Appendix C

24% (46 young people) of the respondents stated that they drank more than three days per week; their drinking habits were examined further to identify the issues of this cohort of young people. The following information represents their responses:

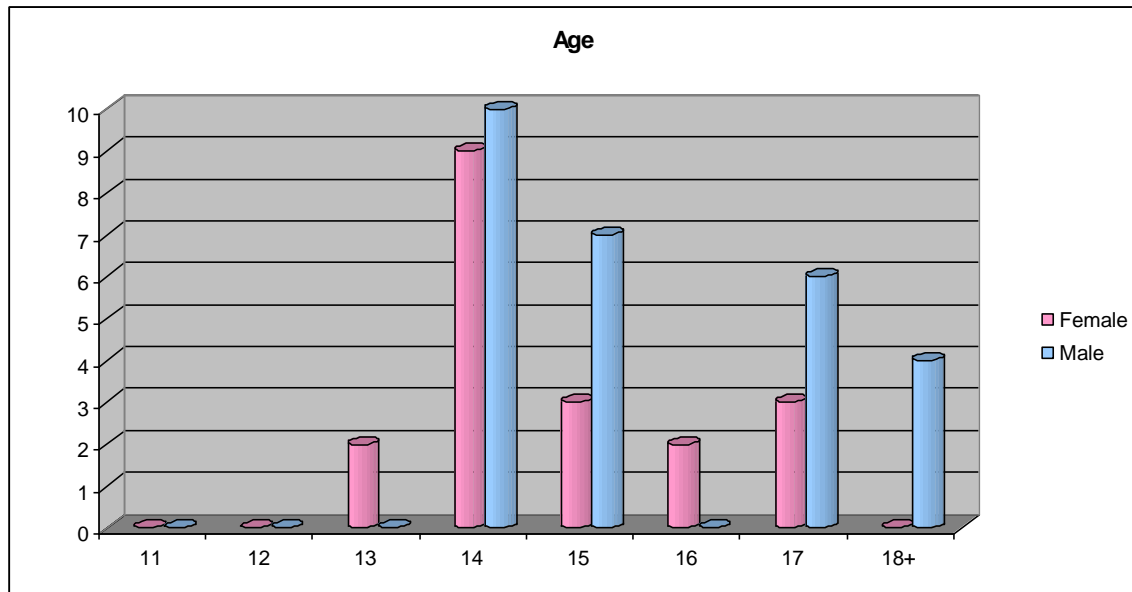
<i>Gender</i>		<i>%</i>
Female	19	41%
Male	27	59%
TOTAL	46	100%



Breakdown of the ages of the 46 young people interviewed

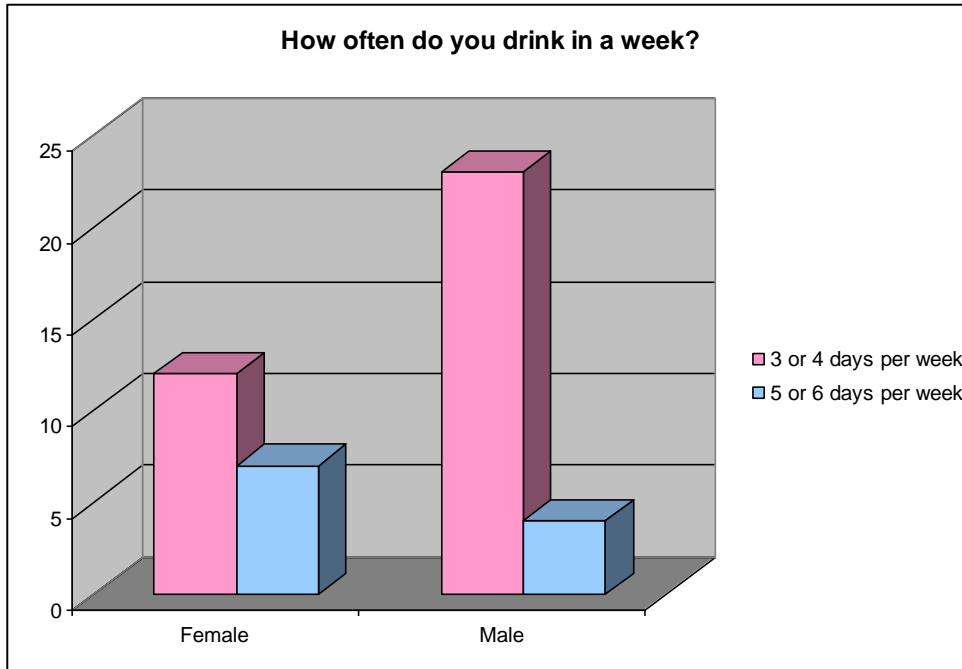
<u>Age</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>%</u>
11	0	0%	0	0%
12	0	0%	0	0%
13	2	4%	0	0%
14	9	20%	10	22%
15	3	7%	7	15%
16	2	4%	0	0%
17	3	7%	6	13%
18+	0	0%	4	9%
TOTALS	19	41%	27	59%

% out
of 46



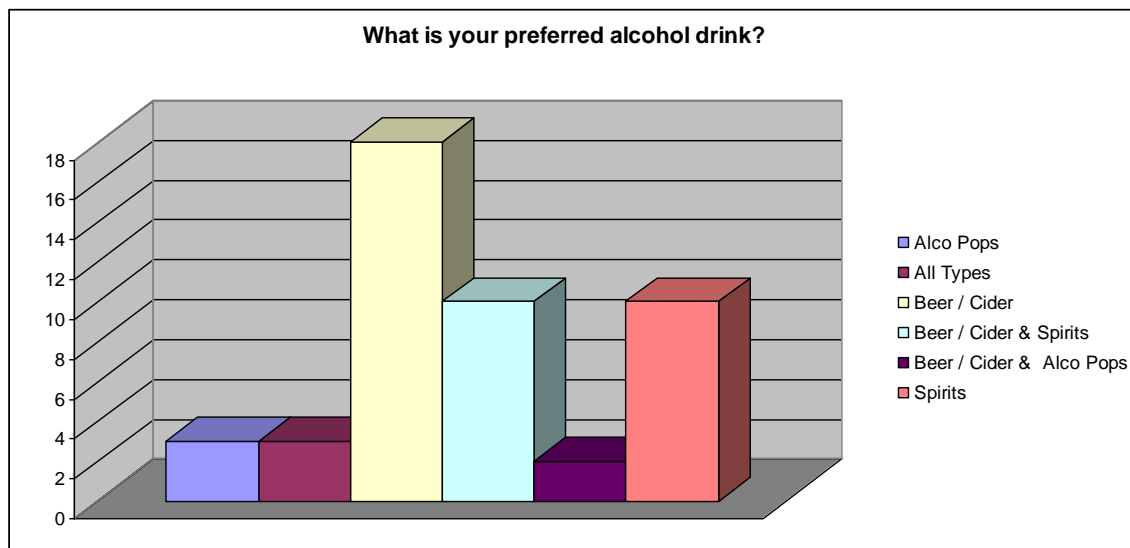
Q1, How often do you drink in a week?	Female	Male
3 or 4 days per week	26%	50%
5 or 6 days per week	15%	9%

% out of **46**



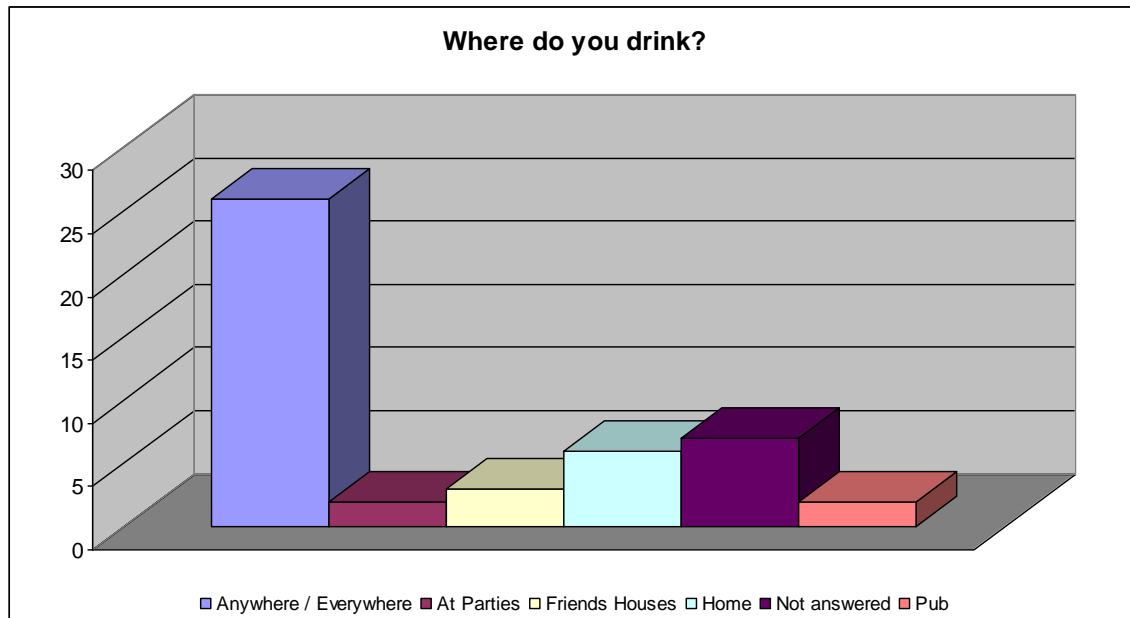
Unlike the national trends the males were reporting higher levels of drinking than females, however the questionnaires were often asked to groups of individuals and therefore they may have been some boasting from the male respondents.

Q2, What is your preferred alcohol drink?		%
Alco Pops	3	7%
All Types	3	7%
Beer / Cider	18	39%
Beer / Cider & Spirits	10	22%
Beer / Cider & Alco Pops	2	4%
Spirits	10	22%
TOTAL	46	100%



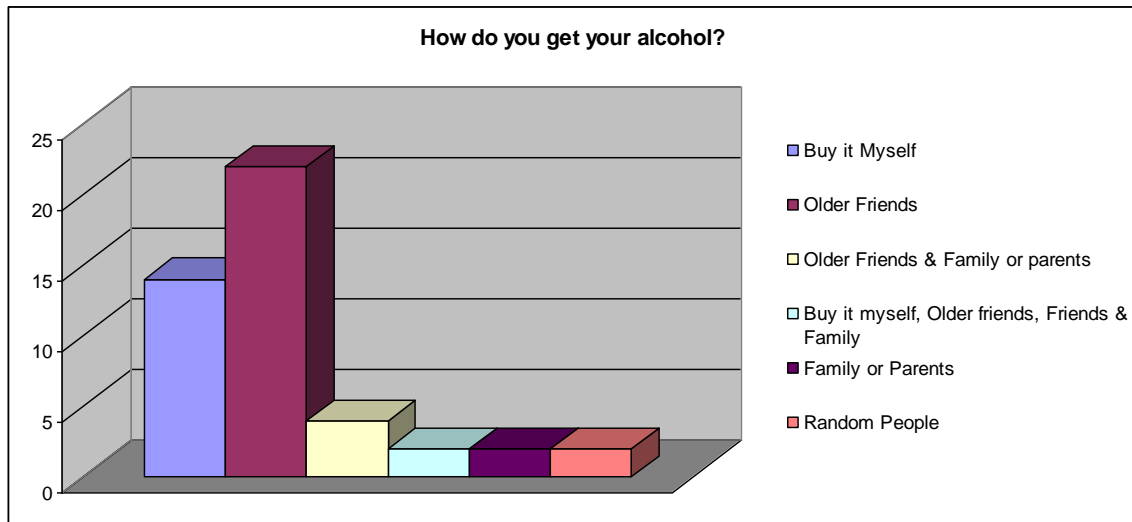
Again beer and cider were shown to be the most popular choice of drink, followed by spirits.

Q3, Where do you drink?		%
Anywhere / Everywhere	26	57%
At Parties	2	4%
Friends Houses	3	7%
Home	6	13%
Not answered	7	15%
Pub	2	4%
TOTAL	46	100%



The drinking of alcohol outside is a great concern for government and they have put great emphasis on enforcement powers for police and community wardens to tackle this issue. The general feel in Billingham is that this is being achieved by the Neighborhood policing initiatives. However, the drinking rates still do appear high, there for the young people are still drinking large amount but not necessarily in public.

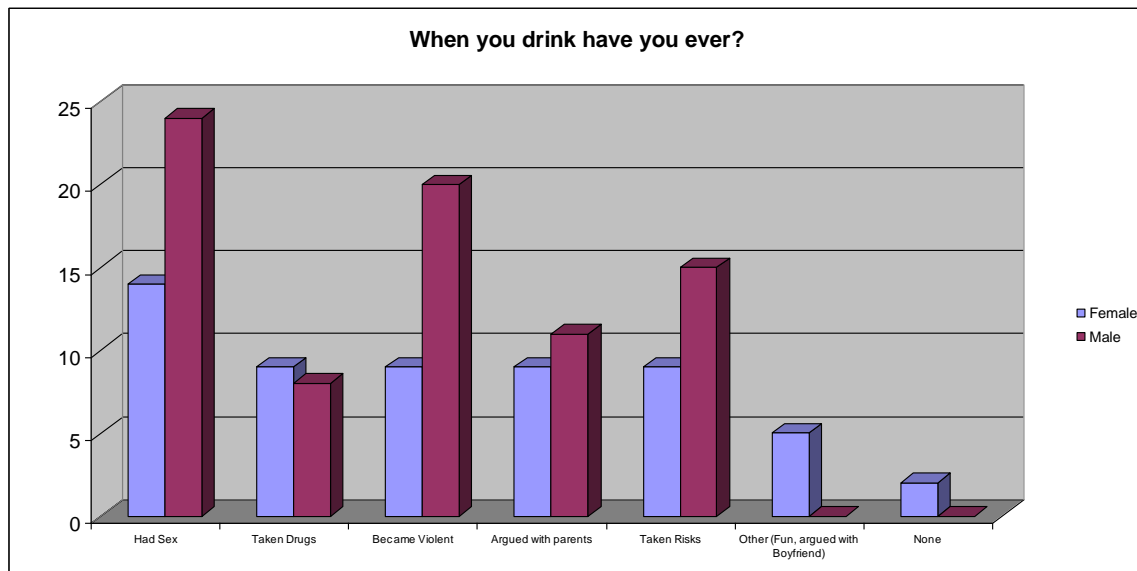
Q5, How do you get your alcohol?		%
Buy it Myself	14	30%
Older Friends	22	48%
Older Friends & Family or parents	4	9%
Buy it myself, Older friends, Friends & Family	2	4%
Family or Parents	2	4%
Random People	2	4%
TOTAL	46	100%



Purchasing alcohol is not difficult for the respondents, and worryingly it is often purchased by them selves. However, a large number of young people are obtaining alcohol from older friends. As previous research has suggested, parents or older friends are providing significant amounts of alcohol for consumption at home or outside.

Q9, When you drink have you ever?	Female	%	Male	%
Had Sex	14	30%	24	52%
Taken Drugs	9	20%	8	17%
Became Violent	9	20%	20	43%
Argued with parents	9	20%	11	24%
Taken Risks	9	20%	15	33%
Other (Fun, argued with Boyfriend)	5	11%	0	0%
None	2	4%	0	0%

% out of 46



This is similar to other research which highlighted that “young people who drink are significantly more likely also to take drugs of all kinds than young people who do not drink. Among 15 year olds who first drank alcohol at 10 years or younger, 17 percent has taken class A drugs at the age of 14, compared with 2 per cent of those who first drank when they were 14 years old.”

Those young people who advised that they drank indoors also disclosed the following risk taking behavior:

Home, Friends Houses, Anywhere & Everywhere

	Had Sex	%
Female	14	30%
Male	18	39%

% out of	46
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	Taken Drugs	%
Female	9	20%
Male	8	17%

% out of	46
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This shows high levels of risk taking behaviour for some young people, given the average age of these respondents is 14 years old education around risk taking behaviour needs to be coordinated and include information on Alcohol, drugs and safe sex.

References/further reading

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Websites

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www.nta.nhs.uk

www.doh.gov.uk

www.natcen.ac.uk

www.nfer.ac.uk

www.ipeg.org.uk

www.drinkanddrugs.net

Thanks to partner agencies -

Neighbourhood Policing at Billingham Police Station

Tristar Homes - Billingham Housing Office

Youth Service - Danielle Barnes

Away Out

Anti Social Behaviour Team

Local youth Clubs - Billingham Campus School, St Michaels School, Old

Billingham Community Centre

Billingham Campus School - for piloting the tool kit

All the young people who were part of the tool kit development

All the young people who completed the questionnaires