

# Alcohol Intervention

## **'Have a Word' Durham University and Students' Union**

This intervention aimed to tackle irresponsible consumption (particularly binge drinking and pre-drinking) and to improve the welfare and wellbeing of students

### **Description of the Intervention**

'Have a Word' is an evidence-based Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice programme (Alcohol IBA) developed by Public Health Wales to help professionals identify those individuals whose drinking might impact their health, currently or in the future and deliver simple, structured advice aimed at reducing this risk. The programme was trialed by Public Health England in the North East.

Work for NUS Alcohol Impact developed an important partnership between the university and the Durham Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (DDARS). DDARS have accredited trainers for 'Have a Word' and it was decided to pilot this training with students to see if it was appropriate for peer interventions. Durham is the first university in the UK to have used this programme.

DDARS and university staff worked with approximately 50 student volunteers from the College Common Rooms, Durham Students' Union and Experience Durham to evaluate and adapt the programme. The training was positively received and engagement was high particularly from the common rooms and their welfare teams. At first the ability to perform an intervention was seen as key but students also wanted more information about alcohol. Interactive elements and resources were also developed.

The new 'Have a Word' programme for students has been rolled out to student leaders/mentors across the university. Students such as common room officers, society leads and sports captains, and Fresher's Representatives (FREPs) are invited to take part in a training event to increase their alcohol awareness, build confidence in their ability to deliver an alcohol brief intervention by recognising possible teachable moments, and signpost to appropriate support. 134 FREPs were trained in September 2017.

The training sessions are evaluated through questionnaires and small focus groups. The impact of the training and subsequent peer interventions has also been evaluated through focus groups.

DDARS and the university have gone on to develop a multi-track programme of 'Have a Word' workshops, bespoke Alcohol Workshops (for example for bar staff and sports teams) and Alcohol and Drug Roadshows.

## What have been the challenges?

Finding time in the university cycle when students are free to attend training.

## What opportunities has the project created?

Collaboration with DDARS has produced a positive working partnership which has also enabled expert substance misuse advisors from the DDARS to deliver easily accessible support from within the University Counselling Service. The Durham partnership are also developing workshops on energy drinks and drug use. There are also opportunities for student volunteering with DDARS.

## What changes would you make?

Constant evaluation enables the sessions to be reviewed and updated to reflect student needs and preferences.

## Do you have any advice for other SUs – dos and don'ts?

- Ensure that students are involved in the development process.
- Work with specialist trainers and use evidence-based programmes.

## Photographs



## Student Feedback

(3 months after training)

*"I've realised how much alcohol actually classes as one unit and how long it takes for alcohol to leave your system"*

*"I've stopped drinking Jägerbombs"*

*"Been more on top of keeping track of the amount I drink, even if that amount hasn't reduced"*

***"Thinking about how much I'm drinking and the drinking habit of friends and those around me"***

*"On several occasions, I encouraged fresher's who seemed really drunk to have a 'water break' while we just chatted"*

***"When someone kept having drunk crying episodes trying to find a time afterwards to sort of ask them how they felt the day after and ask if they wanted to talk"***

*"The reaction was like a recognition on their part of their drinking. After Christmas they have started focusing on university and their studies more and working less and they still drink quite a lot but we all do at university and there has been some change"*

*"I think one of the most beneficial aspects of workshop was how the leaders were not unreasonable and not encouraging us not to drink at all, they were just encouraging safe, responsible drinking. The cups with unit measurements on were also really helpful and interesting"*

## **Further Evaluation**

- Education surrounding energy drinks and alcohol had been very effective; two colleges stopped promoting Jägerbombs or having Jägerbomb specific bars at events
- One president had carried out a successful intervention with a conference guest staying in their college
- Most common interventions were offering people water and making sure people had eaten beforehand.