

Alcohol Misuse

Project details

Full project title: Stockport - Alcohol misuse

Sponsor: NHS Stockport

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Background

The project was a short piece of research on behalf of NHS Stockport. They had a problem with geographically isolated areas of the town drinking dangerous levels of alcohol and wanted to reach these groups with a social marketing intervention. BSMC was asked to conduct some research to scope out the behavioural problem and identify target segments.

The research

Research consisted of a series of focus groups and depth interviews with individuals from the two most deprived housing estates in the area. Respondents varied in age but all had drunk dangerous amounts in the last week.

Results

Findings identified two clear groups of drinkers; those who were single with no children, were 'pre-responsibility' and little curtailed their drinking. Few in this group had jobs or other responsibilities and almost all their efforts went into finding and drinking alcohol with friends. The second group were those who had moved into the 'responsibility' phase of their lives, with a partner or children, tended to save up their drinking for special occasions and then 'make up for lost time' with a big night out.

Finding suggested some clear patterns in the behaviour observed. Firstly, alcohol was cheap, accessible and an everyday part of life. However, it was always consumed with a large group of friends. Drinking alone was not considered normal, and indeed alcohol-related ill health was very much associated with drinking alone, whereas drinking with friends was deemed safe in terms of liver damage or other health problems.

Secondly, and relatedly, drinking was seen as a way of accessing fun and excitement in a life that was fairly devoid of excitement otherwise. Alcohol was a bond that brought a group together and gave them stories to share through their drunken antics.

Outputs

The research report was presented to NHS Stockport and recommendations made for their intervention. Co-creation and diversionary techniques were suggested, based on a community development model. It was advised that marketing communications without an alternative would be likely to fail.

This research and subsequent analysis, based on neo-tribal marketing theories, was presented at the Academy of Marketing Conference in Barcelona in 2010 and has been published in Social Marketing Quarterly.