

Alcohol

Young women - peer research

Authors

Lynzi Ledden
Sophie Vickers

Editor

Dan Moxon

Dear Colleague,

We commend this report to you, commissioned by ChaMPs, on a peer-led research initiative amongst young women in Cheshire and Merseyside, to investigate their attitudes to alcohol, their behaviours, and potential influencing factors.

ChaMPs (Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Network) alcohol programme is working to reduce alcohol harm and has produced this report in partnership with the Cheshire & Merseyside Child Health Development Programme and the North West Regional Youth Work Unit.

In the context of the current Government's approach to "localism", the views of communities are key to informing the development of services. Many areas are taking forward service planning using an asset-based, community development approach. This peer research is a great example as it has the capacity to work with existing groups and networks, building skills amongst the target community.

The research contains key messages from young women about what they perceive will be effective, and ineffective, in relation to campaigns and interventions to reduce misuse of alcohol amongst teenage girls. The recommendations are generic and not just applicable to any one locality area, and we anticipate that this report will have benefits for messaging across other initiatives, for example sexual health.

The research has drawn on views of young women from a variety of localities, both urban and rural, but has some fairly consistent messages expressed. It is important, particularly for those of us who are professionals working with, or on behalf of, young people, that we hear these messages and consider how we will respond to them. At the end of the report you will find the Project Steering Group's response to the research, which is intended to give an initial professional perspective.

We would hope that this report will inform investment decisions that relate to young women in general, and tackling alcohol harm in particular.

ChaMPs will continue to work on the alcohol agenda, and addressing its impact on young people, as a key objective of its Business Plan for 2011-12.

Sarah Marshall
Chair of Steering Group

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Introduction

This report contains the outcomes and findings of the young women and alcohol peer research project. The objectives of this project were to find out what young women thought would be the most effective ways to:

- Increase their resilience against serious alcohol misuse
- Provide protective influences
- Be disincentivised against serious alcohol misuse.

These objectives were achieved utilising a peer research approach in which young women were supported to act as researchers to provide information and thinking that was “unfiltered” by professional perspectives and interpretation. It was a pan Cheshire and Merseyside project, working in 4 of the 8 PCT areas, to identify young women's opinions on alcohol use and to enable the peer research team to draw conclusions about the factors which motivated young women's drinking across Cheshire and Merseyside. This allowed the peer researchers to make recommendations on the sorts of services that should be provided to reduce the harms caused by alcohol. As the project is based on identifying the views and opinions of young women around the meaning of alcohol in their lives, rather than consulting with young people on the quality of existing services, the results are likely to be applicable outside of the Cheshire and Merseyside area.

Project background and acknowledgements

The Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Network (ChaMPs) commissioned this piece of research from the Cheshire and Merseyside Child Health Development Programme. It was important that the research would be timely, relevant, and influential.

The policy context for this project is characterised by:

- National and local data indicating a continuing upward trend in the numbers of young women with physical and mental health complications caused by alcohol misuse
- A prevention agenda, which encourages us to ‘go back up-stream’ and tackle adult ill-health and poor parenting (at an earlier stage)
- A realisation that the adult, professional world cannot accurately understand the motivations and concerns of young people, so research by young people on young people’s attitudes and behaviour is the way forward if we are to produce more effective public health and parenting strategies.

Therefore it was agreed to focus the research on the following themes:

- A focus on teenage girls who are serious misusers of alcohol, or who are at risk of being so.
- The means to increase their resilience; and their incentives to reduce their alcohol intake
- Listening directly to the ‘voices’ of young people, unfiltered by professional perspectives and interpretation.

Within this context the Cheshire and Merseyside Child Health Development Programme worked with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit (NWRWU) to develop the final objectives and a delivery model based around peer led research.

The following organisations formed a steering group that finalised the initial parameters for the project:

- The Cheshire and Merseyside Child Health Development Programme
- ChaMPs
- The North West Regional Youth Work Unit
- Knowsley Primary Care Trust
- Sefton Primary Care Trust
- Central and Eastern Cheshire Primary Care Trust
- Western Cheshire Primary Care Trust

NWRYWU was responsible for establishing and supporting the peer research team and working with the following local delivery partners to identify research participants:

- Cheshire and Warrington Connexions
- Sefton Youth Service
- Knowsley Youth Service

What is peer research?

Participatory research is taken to mean a joint process of inquiry led by the community group that is being researched, rather than research being done by separate researchers, on or with the group. That is, research led and conducted by young people and supported by adults, as distinct from young people participating in adult's research.

Peer research is a form of participatory research which involves supporting members of a social group who would normally be research participants, in this case young people, to design and lead their own research into particular subject areas, and to make recommendations to the commissioning organisations as to how it should respond, as a result of their conclusions on the subject.

In this context peer research is a method of gathering rich, in depth qualitative information about the views, values and life experiences of young people around a particular topic to enable it to be understood from the perspective of a young person. The initial research question which is set by the commissioning organisation is more effective if it is based on one or more broad topic areas. These are used as starting points for the peer researchers to plan activities that enable them to engage in dialogue around these issues with other young people. An example of a research question could be "how are young people influenced to start smoking and what role does media exposure play". Whilst this is similar to a qualitative question that may be used on an adult led piece of research, the peer led dialogue vastly improves the depth of information gathered.

By following this process it is possible to gain information and insights that would not normally be identified by traditional research techniques or consultations. The resulting information can be used to understand the issue from the perspective of the young person and plan appropriate organisation responses. The final stage of the process can involve the peer researchers working collaboratively with adults from the organisation to develop a realistic set of recommendations as to what changes should be made in response to the issue. Peer research is based on ideas developed in community empowerment though does not constitute community empowerment in its truest sense.

Adult defined research parameters

In its purest form all research parameters should be agreed by the peer researchers themselves up to and including whether research should take place and what the research topic should be. However, in the context of commissioning a project within the health sector this is an unrealistic expectation, for without at least some definition of the scope and purpose of research, financial and organisational buy in cannot be achieved.

The following parameters were identified during the commissioning process and agreed by the steering group prior to the involvement of the peer research team.

The objectives of the research would be to find out what young women decide would be the most effective ways to:

- Increase their resilience against serious alcohol misuse
- Provide protective influences
- Be disincentived against serious alcohol misuse.

The research participants would be:

- Young women aged 13-22,
- From the Sefton, Knowsley, Central and Eastern Cheshire and Western Cheshire PCT areas.
- Wherever possible, and to the extent that the methodology allowed, identified by the local delivery partners as - young women who are known to be seriously misusing alcohol; part of peer groups who are seriously misusing alcohol or thought to be at risk of becoming serious misusers.

The research methodology would remain within the following parameters:

- A peer research methodology would be used and 2 young women aged 16-22 from the research locations would be paid as researchers, receiving ongoing support from a youth participation specialist at NWRWU.
- That young people would be identified as potential research participant volunteers by youth professionals from local delivery partners working in the research locations
- That the available budget would enable 4 research sessions to take place in each of the research locations
- The project would take place between September 2010 and March 2011
- That the Peer Researchers would be asked to develop an initial hypothesis, and then test it before drawing conclusions

After these parameters had been agreed, two young women were recruited and trained as peer researchers. With minor exceptions all subsequent decisions within the research were taken by these two young women. The steering group received regular reports on the project progress providing arms length support but not direction. The Regional Participation Officer from NWRWU was responsible for enabling the young women to develop the skills to undertake the research, providing critical support and challenge using youth work techniques, as well as being the link between the steering group and the peer researchers. The remainder of this report is written by the peer research team.

Research question and peer researcher hypothesis

The initial research question which was set by the adult steering group was identified as to find out what young women decide would be the most effective ways to:

- Increase their resilience against serious alcohol misuse
- Provide protective influences
- Be disincentivised against serious alcohol misuse

In response to this question the peer researchers were asked to develop their initial hypothesis, which was done by identifying ideas of why young women may consume alcohol based on the peer researchers own views, opinions and experiences.

The ideas developed were grouped into the following categories:

- Peer influence and influence of others
- Enjoyment purposes to overcome boredom
- Accessibility and cost
- Home life
- An aid to relieve stress
- Lack of alcohol education

Based on each category the peer researchers stated factors that they believed can reduce alcohol consumption with young women. All of these ideas were then developed into the research hypothesis.

Hypothesis

The peer researchers believe that the following factors are the main factors which contribute to young women's consumption:

- Young women drink as a result of peer influence and to attain peer status.
- Young women drink because it is felt to be normal behaviour for teenagers
- Young women drink because alcohol is easily accessible and relatively cheap.
- Young women drink out of boredom.
- Young women are not aware of the limits and risks they face; as a result of this they drink more alcohol.

The peer researchers believe that the following factors will reduce young women's alcohol consumption:

- Encouraging young women to not be influenced by their peers, by building motivation and confidence to go against the peer group
- Encouraging young women to break out of the social norm and promoting independence
- Increasing alcohol prices and ensuring consumers have valid identification.
- Introducing more leisure activities and changing daily routines that will suit young women's wants, to provide alternatives to drinking
- Providing more information on the risks of drinking alcohol; in methods which would engage young women.

Methodology

The peer research team created a series of workshops that would be suitable to deliver to young women within youth centres across the Merseyside and Cheshire area, in order to test the stated hypotheses. The peer researchers decided the best way to get their results was by creating an activity based workshop which would allow young people to discuss the issues. However, after delivering two workshops the venues and circumstances were different from what was expected and so it was found that the information was best collected using just the discussion based parts of these workshops. The final workshop design was based on questions created by the peer researchers to present to a small group of young women which then created discussions involving the young women's opinions upon alcohol misuse.

The sessions ran for approximately forty-five minutes, often longer depending solely upon the motivation of the group and how much discussion was created. In order to effectively gather the results one of the researchers acted as the facilitator of the sessions and the other documented the created discussion.

To identify young women to take part in the research, the peer researchers contacted youth provisions and other services for young people from across the Merseyside and Cheshire area. They asked these services to identify groups of young women who may wish to participate in the research and talk about their experience of alcohol, who were likely to have relevant views and experiences or fall into the target group. The workshop setting ranged from schools to youth centres in these areas. Overall the peer researchers conducted sixteen sets of workshops within the four Primary Care Trust areas of Cheshire and Merseyside, these were:

1. Knowsley
 - Knowsley community college
 - Roby Sixth form college
 - Think Focus Group
 - River Alt Resource Centre, Knowsley
 - Huyton Arts and Sports College
2. Central and Eastern Cheshire
 - Crewe outer areas - Detached youth work session
 - Crewe Connexions centre
 - Crewe Youth Club
 - New Images Youth centre - Winsford
 - Holmes Chapel, Sandbach and Middlewich - Detached youth work session
3. Western Cheshire
 - Rudheath Youth club
 - Frodsham Youth Centre
4. Sefton
 - Orrell Mount youth centre
 - Netherton activity centre
 - Sefton Adult and community learning service
 - Targeted Youth Services, Aintree

Due to the setting, precise details of research participants were not collected, however the young women were from the ages of 12 to 19 years old and group sizes ranged from 5 – 20. The researchers then collated the data that was gathered after each of the sessions which was used to decide whether the initial hypotheses were supported.

Conclusions

Initial Hypothesis

The peer researchers believe that the following factors are the main factors which contribute to young women's consumption:

- Young women drink as a result of peer influence and to attain peer status
- Young women drink because it is felt to be normal behaviour for teenagers
- Young women drink because alcohol is easily accessible and relatively cheap
- Young women drink out of boredom
- Young women are not aware of the limits and risks they face; as a result of this they drink more alcohol.

The peer researchers believe that the following factors will reduce young women's alcohol consumption:

- Encouraging young women to not be influenced by their peers, by building motivation and confidence to go against their peer group
- Encouraging young women to break out of the "social norm" and promoting independence
- Increasing alcohol prices and ensuring consumers have valid identification
- Introducing more leisure activities that will suit young women's wants, will change daily routines and provide alternatives to drinking
- Providing more information on the risks of drinking alcohol; in methods which would engage young women

Factors which contribute to young women's alcohol use

Hypothesis: *Young Women drink as a result of peer influence and to attain peer status.*

Findings

The researchers found that young women were influenced more by their peers and friends to drink than any other category that was suggested as an influence to why young women consume alcohol. The young women additionally felt that if their social group was drinking alcohol they would then feel inclined to do so themselves, this was so they could feel accepted within the group and be a part of what everyone else was doing. The young women in the research were choosing whether or not to drink based on the behaviour of the groups they were part of, rather than choosing groups to be part of based on their own individual desire to drink. However, as to attaining peer status the young women did not openly state this was a factor, yet based on the conversation had around the subject with the groups the peer researchers believe that obtaining status may still have been an influence, just one that the groups did not want to openly admit. For example some women talked of drinking giving them a sense of belonging within the group and so this alters the way they act and the choices they make in order to appease their friends.

Hypothesis: *Young women drink because it is felt to be normal behaviour for teenagers*

Findings

This part of the hypothesis was supported, the young women in the research felt that consuming alcohol is seen as an integral part of young people's lives. Most of the young women felt that the consuming alcohol gave them an insight into what they feel most other teenagers are doing and that drinking alcohol prevents them feeling excluded from what the majority of their generation does. The idea that it is normal for teenagers to drink created a lot of curiosity around the substance for most young women and this contributed to their decision to drink for the first time.

Hypothesis: *Young women drink because alcohol is easily accessible and relatively cheap.*

Findings

The researchers found that accessibility and the lack of barriers to purchasing alcohol was the second most important factor affecting its use within young women. Alcohol could be accessed by the young women through various ways, the most common being through others of an older age purchasing it on their behalf, such as parents, older members of the social group and members of the public that pass by the local off licences or supermarkets. In many cases the young women were easily able to purchase this alcohol themselves, often using fake ID. They can purchase alcohol from both off licenses and supermarkets however the young women felt that it was more difficult to gain alcohol through supermarkets. Money was not seen as a real barrier to accessing alcohol that arose for the young women; they enable themselves to have enough money to purchase alcohol when it is needed and in many cases would prefer to buy alcohol instead of items such as snack food, clothing, make-up or other items they would normally spend their money on. In three instances parents had left money for the young women on the understanding they would purchase their own meals when out with their friends, yet the young women felt they would rather spend their money on alcohol than eat. This is because alcohol is seen as a necessity for some young women.

Hypothesis: *Young women drink out of boredom.*

Findings

In all of the geographic areas the peer researchers conducted the research, boredom played a key role in increasing young women's intake of alcohol. The young women throughout all of the sessions felt that the areas they lived in did not provide suitable entertainment specifically aimed at young women and alcohol often acts as a substitute to solve this boredom.

Hypothesis: *Young women are not aware of the limits and risks they face; as a result they drink more alcohol.*

Findings

The peer researchers obtained mixed views upon this particular part of the hypothesis. Overall the young women did feel they knew their own limits and the risks that they were facing, however not all agreed, as they felt they did not know enough about the situations and health risks they can face when drinking alcohol. The peer researchers found that the information young women were discussing on this topic was mainly hearsay and based on things peers had told them that may or may not be true. When asked specifically about what risks they had knowledge of, they seemed to express some difficulty; they spoke about some risks but didn't elaborate much.

Factors which could reduce young women's alcohol use

Hypothesis: *Encouraging young women not to be influenced by their peers, by building the motivation and confidence to go against the peer group will reduce alcohol consumption*

and

Hypothesis: *Encouraging young women to break out of the 'social norm' and promoting independence will reduce young women's alcohol consumption*

Findings

As identified above, peer influence is the strongest influence on young women to drink alcohol, therefore being able to resist it makes young women more able to resist drinking alcohol. However the young women felt they are not receiving enough support from schools/colleges to promote their independence. As a result they felt they were limited in the confidence and motivation to break away from the norm and achieve their own independent aspirations. The young women felt that teachers and other pastoral support staff need to be more supportive and approachable so young women feel they can speak to them about anything; allowing the young women to set focus on their future and work to achieve something positive, and raise awareness of future opportunities available to them. The young women felt this sort of independence would lead them to be less likely to be influenced by their peers, around all issues including alcohol.

Hypothesis: *Increasing alcohol prices and ensuring consumers have valid identification will reduce alcohol use*

Findings

The young women in this project stated that if alcohol prices do rise in order to try and deter young women from consuming alcohol this would not be a successful solution. They highlighted that they would still find the money to gain access to alcohol, whether this is through their parents or guardians, and in a minority of cases they would be willing to steal alcohol from their own homes or even local shops. Additionally the young women stated if alcohol prices did rise, they would limit their spending on other items and ensure they have enough money to purchase alcohol. Only a minority of the young women gained access to alcohol through the use of a fake ID, so the suggestion of ensuring the consumers have valid identification would only be applicable to some young women.

Hypothesis: *Introducing more leisure activities that will suit young women's needs, and change their daily routines will provide an alternative to drinking*

Findings

Throughout the research project the peer researchers obtained mixed views from the young women, on whether or not increasing the number of leisure of activities available would affect their alcohol consumption. This produced inconclusive results if taking into account all of the sessions. In the discussions the young women felt that some activities would have a larger influence than others in decreasing their alcohol consumption; this depended on the type of activity alongside the price and the times and days that they ran. Some young women felt that extra leisure activities would make no difference and they would still drink at times when the activities were not available. Others felt that that some but not all types of activities could be beneficial to them and would specifically increase their resilience to alcohol.

Examples of these were:

- Youth clubs

These seem to play a limited role in reducing young women's alcohol intake and the young women enjoyed attending informal youth club settings in which they are able to undertake a number of activities, such as socialising with other members. However, they stated that often these youth clubs are not open at days and times preferred by the young people. Opening a youth club on Friday or Saturday nights, providing an indoor, safe environment for the young women to attend as an alternative to drinking was seen to be beneficial.

- Gym and leisure activities

These need to be low priced and suited specifically to young women: The peer researchers also found that some young women have a huge interest in participating in football and other sports, but feel that males are given the priority over young women for venues such as leisure centres and astro turf, so they are unable to get involved in sport as there is nowhere available for them to do so.

Hypothesis: Providing more information on the risks of drinking alcohol; in methods which would engage young women will reduce alcohol consumption

Findings

The young women felt they were being overloaded with continuous information regarding alcohol awareness and the information that was received was concerned with extreme consequences and medical conditions that can arise from alcohol intake, over a period of time. The young women believed that this sort of information does not deter them from drinking alcohol, and information about alcohol should focus on more immediate risks and consequences. For instance, many females were particularly concerned with their image and thought that if there was information about alcohol causing weight gain, or an increase in poor skin conditions, this could cause the young women to refrain from consuming alcohol if they believe this will have an effect upon their appearance. Alternative views to this also arose from some young women who believed that even if they were made more aware of their limits and risks, this would not affect their drinking habits.

The young women felt the information that they were receiving was not delivered in an effective method suitable for the young women. They find methods such as leaflets and visiting websites related to alcohol repetitive and not interesting. They felt that if the method in which alcohol information was delivered was improved, this could reduce their alcohol use.

Examples of this were:

- Drama and performance workshops which relate to alcohol awareness, where young women can get involved and display their own individual views upon alcohol consumption, whether this be through their own experiences, experiences of others or just a general view on the matter.
- Participatory workshops which allow young women to get physically involved whilst additionally contributing to their own learning of alcohol awareness, instead of being fed the information by others. For example: Using beer goggles, discussions, and similar activities.
- Real life experiences from older teenagers that have undergone serious issues arising from alcohol abuse that have deterred them from consuming alcohol. The young women felt this sort of information could then leave a lasting impression upon the young women and make them more wary of their own alcohol intake.

Other factors not identified in the original hypothesis

In nearly all of the areas visited, attitudes to alcohol seemed to be roughly the same. However in very rural areas such as Frodsham the young women seemed to mix in smaller groups and were able to act more independently of their groups being less dependent on them. This meant they were less likely to be influenced by their peers to drink alcohol. Further work would need to be done in these areas to understand if this was common to all rural areas.

Summary and recommendations

Summary

The most influential factors which contribute to increasing young women's alcohol consumption are:

- Young women drink as a result of the influence of their peers, and because it is seen as "the norm for teenagers"
- Alcohol is easily accessible for young women, most notably though members of the public, or older members of their peer group purchasing it from off licences or parents purchasing it on their behalf.

The factors which are most likely to contribute to reducing young women's alcohol usage are:

- Increasing young women's confidence and independence and ability to go against peers and social norms
- Reducing young women's access to alcohol by preventing or discouraging people purchasing it on their behalf and preventing the use of fake I.D.s.

The following factors have some effect on reducing young women's drinking (for more discussion see conclusion).

- Access to more leisure activities that are specifically suited to the young women.
- Receiving alcohol information which is delivered in an engaging way and is more focused on issues the young women would like to learn about, such as weight and image related issues,
- Increasing young women's awareness of harms and risk of alcohol

The following factors are not likely to have an impact on reducing young women's alcohol use

- Increasing the price of alcohol.
- Providing alcohol information which is repetitive or delivered in an un-engaging way and focused on long term or medical risks

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the peer researchers make the following recommendations for change under the original project objectives:

Recommendations with high impact

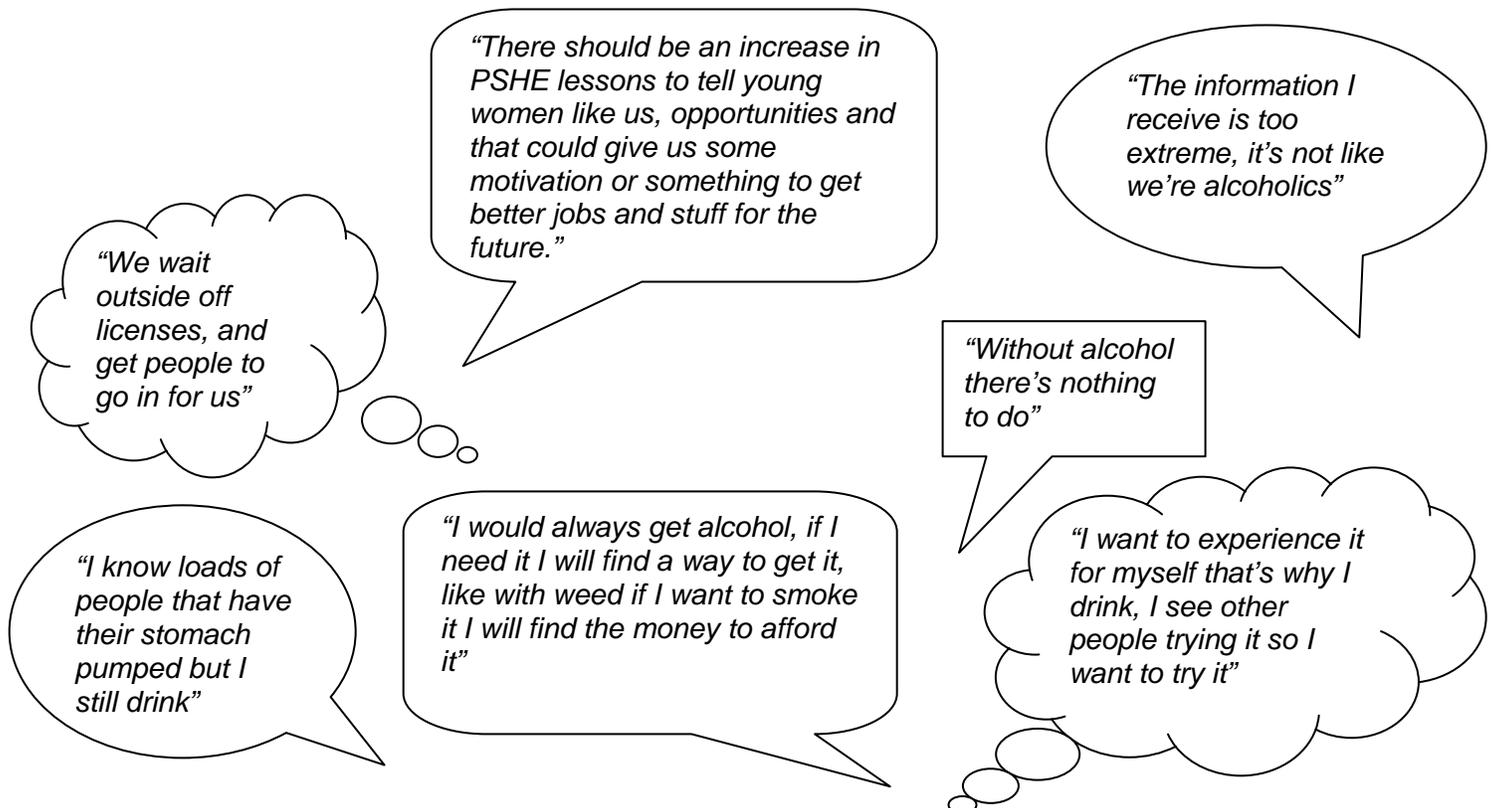
- Increase the role of educational programmes that can focus on promoting independence and resisting peer influence. (e.g. by improving the quality of such as Personal Social Health and Education lessons)
- Provide better access to specialised staff within schools and colleges that can oversee issues and progress of students and offer one to one guidance on their wellbeing and education and to additionally increase their awareness of the choices available to them within life
- Discourage older members of the public from purchasing alcohol on behalf of young women under 18

- Discourage off licenses from selling directly to young women and people who are purchasing alcohol on their behalf

Recommendations with more limited impact

- Reduce the use of fake I. D's:
- Providing more leisure activities that are suitable for young women such as youth clubs and sports activities
- Change the content of the information delivered in alcohol education to suit the concerns of the young women so that it focuses on immediate risks and consequences such as putting on weight, rather than long term risks that can arise from alcohol intake over a period of time.
- Altering the methods in which alcohol information is delivered to make it more engaging for young women e.g.:
 - Participatory workshops which include things like drama, and physical activities such as beer goggles and discussion
 - Hearing real life experiences from older teenagers that have undergone serious issues arising from alcohol abuse that have deterred them from consuming alcohol.

Quotes





[Lynzi Ledden - Peer Researcher](#)

Hi, I'm Lynzi. I am 20 years old and live in Kirkby which is part of Knowsley. I'm currently studying Performing arts at degree level at Liverpool Hope University. I have been involved in a number of voluntary works alongside other young people which is how I got the opportunity to work on this project.

I have really enjoyed this project, and working with different young women from Cheshire and Merseyside, and learning about their experiences with alcohol. Also it has given me the opportunity to work in different areas across the borough and visit places I have never been before. The Role of being a peer researcher was exciting for me and has also helped me in my own projects outside of this job role.



[Sophie Vickers - Peer Researcher](#)

Hello, I'm Sophie. I am 17 years old and live in Prescot which is part of Knowsley. I'm currently studying at Rainhill Sixth Form College, where I am undertaking a selection of A Levels in the following subjects: English Language, Geography, History and Law. With being a young person myself, I have always been interested in working with other young people and felt it is significant to get their voices heard. That is one of the reasons I applied for this particular job. It has been a different experience for me and has given me a lot more knowledge and has also opened up opportunities for me to work with young people in the future. I have overall enjoyed my role as a peer researcher.

[Dan Moxon – Research Supervisor](#)

Hi I'm the Regional Participation Officer at NWRWU. I'm 28, so far too old to be called a young person. My role in this project has been to support and supervise Sophie and Lynzi, providing both challenge and advice, but letting them form their own decisions and opinions about the running of the research and the issues. I also acted as the adult bridge to the steering group, and acted to edit the final report into a document that was suitable for everyone. Outside of this project, my role is to support the development of youth participation across the North West on behalf of all of the regions local authorities.

Response from the project steering group

Why this research is important?

This research offers a unique perspective to inform all partners concerned with reducing alcohol misuse amongst young women in Cheshire and Merseyside:

- It has been carried out across half of the Primary Care Trust areas in Cheshire and Merseyside, so it is representative of the range of localities in this area.
- It expresses the 'voices' of young people, un-filtered by professional jargon and modification.
- It provides young women with an opportunity to speak about the issues that are important to them.
- It offers an insight into the influence they may have over the next generation.
- It has enquired what might strengthen resilience to the harms caused by alcohol.

Why this research is useful?

The steering group for this research recognises that the young people involved will not always package their opinions in a way that can easily be translated into the current professional context. The group also acknowledges that what actually influences us, and what we state, or think, influences us, are not always the same.

The steering group has, therefore, carefully considered the results of the research, and makes the following recommendations for effective strategic planning in relation to young women and alcohol.

These recommendations are presented as a whole, to inform effective planning, and have not been set in any order of priority. However it is recognised that tackling alcohol harm is a broad issue and partners involved in work to address harm will have differing priorities. For example, some partners will be more concerned with availability and enforcement issues, whereas others will be concentrating on reducing health harms and improving well-being.

Who we are?

The membership and terms of reference of the steering group are set out in the Appendix.

The steering group's recommendations

The steering group's membership and terms of reference are set out in the Appendix. The group wanted to make collective comments on the implications of research on planning services from a professional perspective, without diluting the messages as they stood from the participants and peer researchers.

The group recommends to commissioners and those involved in planning services for young women that, in order to achieve the most effective outcomes for investment, strategies should focus on the following three main themes:

1 Public health strategies

- 1.1 Giving information to young women which is
 - tailored to them and their specific needs
 - delivered in person by teachers and other skilled professionals
- 1.2 Recognising that most young women are making social choices when they drink
 - they do not see themselves as problem drinkers

- 1.3 Recognising that young women decide to drink as an integral part of 'normal' lives
 - they do not see this, in any way, as “abnormal”
- 1.4 Highlighting immediate risks, which are relevant to young women
 - e.g. social (embarrassment), image or safety
- 1.5 Using a range of initiatives/activities to tackle alcohol harm
 - they are unlikely to be put off excessive drinking by one strategy (e.g. pricing) alone

2 Supply side strategies

- 2.1 Giving a significantly higher priority to supply side strategies
 - the researchers found that there were few barriers to under-age young women accessing alcohol
- 2.2 Strengthening disincentives for adult proxy-purchasers, and for off licences
 - suppliers are taking advantage of the desire of young women to drink
- 2.3 Investing in activity to reduce the wide-spread use of fake IDs
 - although the peer researchers would caution against unrealistic expectations for this approach

3 'Whole system' strategies

- 3.1 Working with schools to provide young women with access to support and other personal development opportunities, to gain greater self-confidence and capacity to resist peer influences
 - through teachers and more specialist staff
- 3.2 Providing access for young women to sporting, and other, leisure activities, which are dedicated to them and their interests (e.g. young women's football league)
 - so that these opportunities are not dominated by young men
- 3.3 Open youth club facilities at the key times of Friday and Saturday nights
 - in addition to their mid-week provision

**Sarah Marshall, Chair
Steering Group**

Appendix A

Alcohol and Young Women Project Steering Group

Membership

The Group was chaired by Sarah Marshall, ChaMPs, representing the commissioner of this piece of peer research.

The two agencies which led the project as a partnership were represented on the Group:

- Dan Moxon, North West Regional Youth Work Unit – fieldwork leadership
- Jonathan Smith, Child Health Development Programme – overall project management

Mark Limmer, Regional Alcohol and Young People Lead, represented the NW-wide perspective.

The other four members of the Group, importantly, were representatives of each of the four participating areas [Sefton, Knowsley, Western Cheshire, and Central and Eastern Cheshire]:

- Claire McCormick
- Lesley Cleworth (later replaced by Christine Owens)
- Jayne Street
- Catherine Mills, respectively.

Ian Whiteside, from Knowsley, represented the views of the Youth Services.

Towards the end of the project, we also met with the two peer researchers: Lynzi and Sophie.

Terms of Reference

Overall Purpose:

- To facilitate a successful completion of the Project.

Functions:

- To bring together the key stakeholders in the Project, on a regular basis, in order to:
 - co-ordinate the running of the Project
 - agree a Project Brief
 - monitor progress against the Brief
 - support and encourage those undertaking the Project
 - resolve problems that may arise
 - agree communications to be sent out by the Group

Membership:

- The Commissioner: ChaMPs
- The Project Team: NWRWU + CHDP
- A representative from each of the participating Children's Trust areas

Meeting Arrangements:

- 2-hourly
- July, October, January
- Riverside Park, Bromborough
- ChaMPs to chair
- CHDP to administrate

