

# Safe. Sensible. Social.

Tackling alcohol fuelled  
youth anti-social behaviour  
and crime



department for  
children, schools and families

***“Tackling problems caused by alcohol is a key public concern. The summer alcohol crackdown has brought police together with both youth services and alcohol workers to make a real difference to local communities. The results of these operations speak for themselves.”***

Chief Constable Ian McPherson, Association of Chief Police Officers lead for Children and Young People

***“Alcohol is often at the root of youth crime. The 5,000 litres of drink taken out of the hands of teenagers on the streets during this successful campaign undoubtedly represents many incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour that have been prevented across the country over the summer.***

***“This crackdown complements the excellent on-going work of the £100 million Youth Crime Action Plan and builds on the success of previous confiscation and enforcement operations to tackle underage drinking. Through YCAP we are preventing young people becoming involved in crime, taking swift action where it does happen and enforcing robust punishments where behaviour is repeated and unacceptable.”***

***“Recent new measures outlined in the Police and Crime Bill will further strengthen police powers to deal with young people drinking alcohol in public”***

Alan Campbell, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for Crime Reduction, Home Office

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## Glossary

**Operation Stay Safe:** partnerships between the police and local authorities sweeping anti-social behaviour hotspots and removing young people who are at significant risk off the streets at night and taking them to a place of safety.

**Street based teams:** partnership between police and youth workers keeping young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Test purchase operations:** partnership between police and trading standards officers to crack down on retailers that sell alcohol to under-18s.



## Foreword, Dawn Primarolo



Although fewer young people are drinking alcohol, those that do drink are tending to drink more and what they drink tends to be stronger. The damaging effects of alcohol on health are all too obvious, with some 10,000 under-18s being admitted to hospital every year because of the effects of alcohol. Beyond the immediate health concerns, lower inhibitions that result from drinking alcohol lead many young people to take risks that can have serious and far-reaching consequences. One in eight 16 year-old girls has had unprotected sex and one in five 16 year olds have been caught up in violent behaviour after drinking.

Both to protect young people themselves and to alleviate the negative impact that drunk and rowdy behaviour can have on the wider community the Department for Children, Schools and Families provided an additional £1.4 million to 69 local authorities to tackle alcohol-related youth crime and anti-social behaviour during the summer. Only by changing people's daily reality do we stand a chance of shifting the consistently negative public perceptions of young people's behaviour.

Across the country, local authorities worked in partnership with the police and other agencies to stem the supply of alcohol to underage drinkers, to provide additional challenge and support for those young people who do drink, and to ensure that there are enough positive activities available for young people that provide real and credible alternatives to hanging around and getting drunk.

The results were truly impressive. Between July and September 2009:

- **5,171** litres of alcohol were confiscated from young people.
- **2,467** licensed premises were visited as part of test purchasing operations – **349** or **14%** failed a test purchase operation.
- Action was taken **3721** times to disrupt young people's drinking, including **491** directions to disperse.
- **1,982** young people were referred to support services including **324** to alcohol services.
- **1,829** parents were made aware of their young person's alcohol-related behaviour.

The importance of combining effective action with local communications cannot be overestimated. That is why we also challenged local areas to develop innovative and imaginative communications campaigns both to educate young people about the dangers of binge drinking and promote the available alternatives, and to inform young people and the wider community about what action is being taken locally to tackle alcohol-related anti-social behaviour.

The Youth Alcohol Action Plan set out government's national commitment to such an approach. Since its publication we've moved ahead with plans to improve drug and alcohol education, to introduce statutory personal, social and health education, to bring forward powers through the Policing and Crime Bill to allow the police to tackle young people drinking in public more effectively, including making it easier for them to confiscate alcohol from young people and, in the New

Year, to launch a major communications campaign aimed at preventing young people from starting drinking too early.

This booklet contains examples and case studies of good local practice from the summer alcohol campaign and beyond. I sincerely hope that it helps drive a similarly co-ordinated approach at the local level and helps identify what more you might do in your local area to tackle underage drinking.

You can find further information about the Youth Taskforce and the full range of its initiatives at

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ytf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ytf)

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dawn Primarolo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'P'.

**Dawn Primarolo,**

Minister of State for Children, Schools and Families.

### Case Study: Blackpool

Blackpool used the '**Buzz Bus**', a mobile young people resource, to travel around the town, visiting schools, community centres and public places, offering teenagers advice on a wide range of subjects including sexual health, contraception, substance misuse, alcohol and smoking. It backed up the advice and information service with targeted fun activities to engage young people.

The bus was used to transport young people who otherwise might start drinking and causing trouble to local youth facilities. Working with the police, Blackpool's youth services were able to profile young people at risk and used intelligence about hot spots of where they were hanging around to prevent anti-social behaviour.

The Buzz Bus has become a successful brand in its own right.

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### Case Study: St Helens

Over the summer period St Helens deployed dedicated police patrols alongside youth workers on Friday and Saturday nights to engage young people hanging around. These patrols were deployed based on local police intelligence on youth anti-social behaviour hot spots, and used police enforcement powers to confiscate any alcohol found. The joint teams also referred young people to a range of youth engagement interventions, including positive activities and services to help tackle their alcohol and drug misuse where necessary.

As part of Operation Stay Safe substance misuse workers were on hand with police to undertake an immediate assessment of potential alcohol issues. St Helens found that having substance misuse workers available during the operations ensured that as well as engagement, street based teams could educate and challenge young people on the consequences of risky behaviour.

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On one night in July, 42 young people were engaged, nearly 30 units of alcohol were seized and 2 younger girls were removed to the Stay Safe place of safety due to their vulnerability through drinking alcohol.

During July and September St Helens has reported a **30% reduction in calls to police on youth anti-social behaviour** compared to the same period in the previous year. This information is collected from the operational records of the local police force.

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### Case Study: South Tyneside

The *Your Friday Night* campaign in South Tyneside provides young people with information and advice on the effects and risks of alcohol, where to get further help and a full list of sports, arts and other local activities as an alternative.

The campaign was developed and produced with heavy input from local young people. This ranged from the content and tone of advice that was produced through to the design of communications materials. The most important thing from young people's perspective was getting balanced, accurate information about alcohol and that the services they came into contact with treated them with respect.

The campaign materials were promoted in assemblies in each of the authority's secondary schools, and then used as the basis for further alcohol education. The campaign website was also promoted, reaching some 10,000 young people. Posters and other campaign materials were put in place across youth services, cinemas and other targeted locations.

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Police and other enforcement staff carried branded promotional items with the web address that they distributed to young people they came into contact with. These also carried the freephone number of Matrix young people's service which offered substance misuse support for those who had needed more specialist help.

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Matrix also established links to the Operation Stay Safe (known in South Tyneside as Safe Stop) and to local A&E departments to ensure young people engaging in risky behaviour could be identified and linked in to the service. A simple screening tool was developed to help non-specialist staff assess whether or not a referral was appropriate. Using this screening tool, 18 young people were referred to substance support services.

Alongside this campaign the police ran **36 test purchase** operations resulting in **9 failures**, and **168 litres of alcohol** were confiscated from young people drinking.

The campaign has been welcomed by young people, teachers and other professionals and Matrix has seen an increase in young people seeking help or further information.

**Inspector Don Wade, from South Tyneside Area Command,** said:

“The results of Operation Safe Stop continue to be encouraging and the initiative is certainly having an impact in lowering levels of youth-related anti-social behaviour. The results also suggest that young people involved in the initiative are taking on board advice given to them so that they steer clear from offending – our aim is to stop them from getting into trouble with police as well as to prevent them from falling victim to a crime.

We have also had positive feedback from parents of young people. We are committed to working with our partners and the public, including the parents of youngsters involved in Operation Safe Stop, to continue the project’s success.”

**Councillor Jim Foreman, Lead Member Children and Young People**, said:

“Operation Safe Stop is enabling us to prevent children and young people becoming involved in, or falling victim to crime and anti-social behaviour. We are taking vulnerable youngsters off the streets to a place where their parents can collect them and what is pleasing is that parents have been very supportive of what we are doing. I am delighted to see that our focus on early intervention is getting results.”

Latest figures show that it’s continuing to have a positive effect with a **24% reduction in youth-related anti-social behaviour on Friday and Saturday nights**. This information is collected from the operational records of the local police force.

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### Case Study: Brighton and Hove

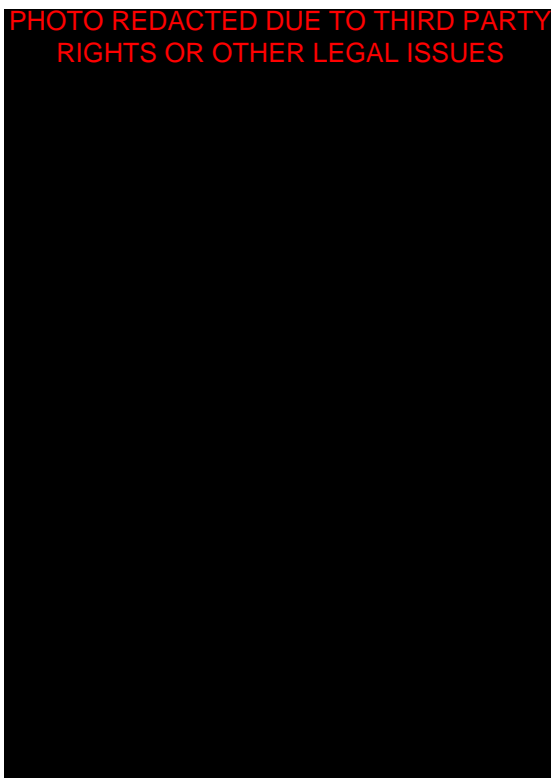
Brighton and Hove's Operation Park is an early intervention initiative run by police in conjunction with the Council's Youth Outreach Team, with the aim of preventing young people becoming vulnerable through alcohol consumption and becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

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Over the summer period Operation Park ran every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night:

- **575** young people were engaged through Operation Park.
- **540** were found to be involved in some sort of anti-social behaviour.
- Police used confiscation powers to remove alcohol from **320** young people.
- Only **12%** have been engaged on a second occasion for anti-social behaviour.

Through Operation Park police and youth workers hold weekly meetings to determine where the operations will be most effective and strong links have been forged with RU OK (the substance misuse service) to deliver interventions and support operations. Firm links have also been established with A&E with some useful information sharing taking place. The safeguarding focus was particularly around binge drinking with support also coming from the street-based teams.



In situations where behaviour was an issue Brighton and Hove involved the family, they did this through the use of targeted parenting programmes and the use of parenting contracts and orders. In most cases the police and the Council's Outreach Team sent letters to the young person's parents and undertook home visits to inform parents of their children's activities and behaviour and to agree ways of dealing with it.

Over this period Brighton reported a **38% reduction in calls to police in relation to youth anti-social behaviour**. This information is collected from the operational records of the local police force.

### Case Study: Leicester

Leicester combined Operation Stay Safe patrols involving police and youth services, with test purchase operations and the deployment of the youth service mobile provision (the 'Custard Bus') to tackle the problems resulting from underage drinking.

Operation Stay Safe was conducted outside two clubs which hold under 18 dance events where alcohol misuse had been an issue. Alcohol test strips were also used to test whether soft drinks bottles contained alcohol, and alcohol was confiscated as a result.

The Police and Trading Standards conducted **8 Alcohol Test Purchase operations** throughout the summer holidays. Operations were intelligence led and conducted in areas close to parks and open spaces where anti-social behaviour had been reported. In the exercise over **180 premises** were visited resulting in:

- **36** Penalty Notices for Disorder
- **1** prosecution and
- **5** licenses being reviewed.

Leicestershire Police and East Midlands Ambulance Service worked together in local hot spots for anti-social behaviour using the Custard Bus as a way to reach out and engage young people.

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On Friday and Saturday night the Custard Bus helped identify young people who were out late at night, and who were at risk of becoming victims of crime or of being drawn into criminal behaviour, and took them to a place of safety. The bus was also used to pick up young people who had been drinking and dedicated workers used an alcohol screening tool to provide advice and support as appropriate.

The street teams spoke to up to **100 local teenagers** about safe and sensible approaches to drinking and handed out leaflets to sign post teenagers to support and advice services.

During the summer period Leicester reported a 4% reduction in calls to police on youth anti-social behaviour between July and September 09 compared to the same period in the previous year. This information is collected from the operational records of local police forces.

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### Case Study: Plymouth

The **Don't Get Plastered campaign** was targeted at schools, colleges and youth clubs to educate young people about the risks of drinking alcohol. A range of materials was produced including leaflets and posters.

These were also distributed through the range of summer activities being delivered. Police Community Support Officers ran sport and dance activities. Partnerships with the

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voluntary sector provided film making opportunities. And there was targeted work with a group of young women to provide girls basketball, dance, and health & beauty activity.

Operation Stay Safe ran monthly on a Friday and Saturday night and the collaboration between the police and social workers was deemed **"a brilliant outcome"**.

Using police intelligence a mobile youth facility was used to engage young people in hot spots of alcohol consumption. Police and substance misuse officers noted that early intervention, before the young people were drunk, could prevent drunken and anti-social behaviour later at night.

When young people were found drunk and involved in anti-social behaviour, the police visited the parents of 35 young people and made them aware of their drinking behaviour.

In test purchase operations, police targeted clubs and off licenses on a weekly basis. Over **116 test purchase** operations were carried out, resulting in a **12% failure rate**, fixed penalty notices and some prosecutions.

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### **Case Study: Greenwich**

Greenwich undertook a communications campaign in partnership with the Greenwich Time publication, which is a free newspaper delivered to every household in the borough. The campaign aimed to portray young people positively, both through its wording and images. For example, Greenwich chose pictures of young people engaged with the detached youth team and involved in physical activity. It also aimed to highlight the risks of alcohol to young people, and the additional enforcement actions being taken to address underage drinking during this campaign. Alongside the positive messages, risks and enforcement information, the articles featured young people who have turned their lives around after involvement in excessive drinking, with the support of Greenwich youth workers and partner agencies.

In addition, the campaign drew attention to initiatives such as Operation Stay Safe and gave information about local policing and test purchase operations. Police cadets were also involved in over 30 test purchase operations. If premises were caught selling alcohol to underage young people, the premises could then be subject to a review of their licence.

Early responses and feedback from the campaign have been encouraging. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams and detached youth workers have had further successful engagement with young people and the community, and the campaign has raised awareness about the consequences of excessive consumption of alcohol.

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## Lessons Learned

- Co-ordinating activity across the three strands (prevention, enforcement and support) is essential. Agreeing a shared set of priorities and collaborating on timing helps maximise impact and awareness of progress made.
- The links between support and enforcement agencies are particularly important. Having embedded support workers alongside the police or street based teams helps ensure direct access to help for those who need it.
- Tackling young people's drinking has to be linked to a broader strategy to manage the night-time economy. However the two issues do have significant differences. Approaches need to take account of the problems experienced in city centres, parks, estates, shopping centres and other locations where young people drink.
- Licensing activities, particularly test purchase operations, can be better-targeted using information from health, support and other enforcement agencies.
- Positive activities, particularly under-18s clubs or music events that are alcohol free have shown considerable promise in reducing the problems associated with young people's drinking. They also provide an opportunity to disseminate advice and information.
- It is clear from the summer, that communicating effective police action on alcohol misuse can be successfully combined with promoting positive messages about young people more generally. The two do not contradict each other if planned in a co-ordinated way.

## Useful Links

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ytf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ytf)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/alcohol-related-crime/>

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/health/substancemisuse/>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news/alcohol-strategy-announced>



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