

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SUBSTANCE MISUSE STRATEGY COMMISSIONING GROUP



“A TRULY TEACHABLE MOMENT”

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to highlight the potential that exists to extend the current Alcohol Diversion Scheme, the benefits that this would bring, and the relatively straightforward work required to deliver significant benefits that would support the overarching Substance Misuse Strategy.

Alcohol Diversion Scheme

The Alcohol Diversion Scheme is offered to any person arrested in the Nottingham City boundaries for being Drunk and Disorderly, and in Mansfield and Ashfield for Drunk and Disorderly and for Using Insulting and Threatening Words or Conduct.

People have 21 days from the issue of their fine to make contact with Last Orders and 60 days from the point of contact to attend a course which will see a reduction in their fine from £80.00 to £40.00. Courses are run in the evening and on Saturday mornings to accommodate students and those who work.

The emphasis is on the person who has received a fine to make contact but Last Orders will send reminders to those showing on the ticket office spreadsheet

Of particular significance, is that if an individual completes the course, then they will not be subject of a disclosable conviction for the offence they were arrested or given the fixed penalty notice for. In the current economic climate, that has significant implications for an individual's employment prospects.

The course content covers such areas as alcohol and its relationship to offending behaviour and the dangers of mixing alcohol and cocaine. It uses evidence based MI techniques proven to effect behaviour change.

The course also supports the Manchester based 'Punched Out Cold' campaign and uses Police CCTV of the assault to instil how vulnerable people are to danger when intoxicated.

The Alcohol Diversion scheme therefore aims to deliver information that will be effective in achieving long term behavioural change in relation to peoples drinking behaviour.

The scheme was created in partnership with Nottinghamshire Police, Framework Housing Association (FHA) and the Crime and Drugs Partnership. FHA was a natural choice to deliver the course as they hold the contract for the Last Orders Alcohol Services. Last Orders offer assessment and treatment for drinkers in Nottingham in addition to delivering training to many workers including health care staff and the Police.

The scheme is a recent venture in Nottingham starting in November 2011, but has been successfully piloted in other areas namely Hertfordshire and Derbyshire

The course is not aimed at chronic dependent drinkers but at the younger binge drinkers who are able to display control over their drinking patterns

FHA and the Police have a confidentiality protocol and a service level agreement signed by both parties. Attendees willing to be contacted at three and six months sign a consent form with a contact number, Last Orders staff are bound by their service confidentiality policy and no personal information is shared with any other party.

The learning outcomes are as follows:

- Physical effects of alcohol misuse
- Psychological effects of alcohol misuse
- Why people are vulnerable when intoxicated
- Dangers of mixing certain drugs with alcohol
- How to calculate units
- Relationship between alcohol and offending behaviour

The course is designed to be interactive and starts off with a quiz to establish knowledge about alcohol and there are case studies focusing on what led to the attendees being arrested on that night but not others.

The course focuses on reward in the form of a 50% reduction in their fine as opposed to a punitive approach. The course trainer is however very clear with all attendees that the Police still have their details on file and that the course is a one off option. Should they be arrested again for drunk and disorderly they may be treated differently by the criminal justice system and could acquire a criminal record.

Headlines from the evaluations have been.....

- Every attendee has been sober, polite and willing to engage. Most look embarrassed and are quiet when they first arrive and most expect to see some sort of Police presence. Once they realise that it is an informal process run by nursing staff people tend to relax and are happy to share their stories and experiences.
- Typical offences people have been arrested for are urinating in the street and then becoming verbally inappropriate with the police, refusing to move on from night clubs they have been ejected from and becoming verbally aggressive in the Emergency Department.
- Interestingly, the majority of attendees think the Police were heavy handed and too authoritative and think the arrest was unfair. However, when challenged about this and asked about what their behaviour would have been like had they been sober, all stated that they would have walked away from the situation without incident.
- During the course all attendees are given exercises to do; the first tries to ascertain how much alcohol was drank on the night of the offence. The majority of people have no real recollection and drinking excessively (pre loading) before they go out is a common theme.
- Most attendees are 'unit' naive and have no idea how many units are in what drink but all so far have made a real effort to try and calculate the amount they drank on the night of their arrest. Units have varied from the lowest at 18 to the highest at 38 with these being possible conservative estimates.
- When informing attendees that it takes about one hour for the body to metabolise a unit of alcohol they have been shocked at the realisation that they would probably have been drink driving the next day and for those with children, unable to care for them properly.
- When asked about what they would have done differently the overwhelming response has been to not pre load before they go out. If the diversion course can affect that sort of behaviour change in some of the attendees then this will have a positive impact on people's behaviour when on a night out.
- No attendee so far has been aware that it is dangerous to mix cocaine and alcohol and that a by product call cocaethylene is produced in the body when the two are mixed. This in turn can cause cardiac problems in some, especially if pre-disposed. If this message can be spread to friends and family and reduce the use of the two this could prevent premature deaths.

It was extended to include Mansfield and Ashfield in Autumn 2012.

From interviews with stakeholders the following observations have been recurrent messages:

- Awareness and utilisation of the scheme by the operational Police officers could be improved.
- Proactive utilisation of the scheme within the Custody environment could be improved.
- That there were missed opportunities to market the scheme in other than police environments, such as Jobcentres, Health environments etc.
- The implications to an individual, on their criminal record status need to be more explicitly pushed, if they do not take advantage of the scheme.
- That those potentially subject of the scheme, who are in the City and who fit the "student" profile, are more likely to take advantage of the scheme.
- At Mansfield custody suite, the feedback was that those arrested simply wish to forget about the whole matter and did not wish to have the embarrassment of attending the course, or that their employment status would be unaffected by another conviction.

- That whilst the administration and co ordination of the scheme has been to date effective, that the larger target cohort will require dedicated support, which will need resourcing. To give the type of control over all the elements of the process, which protects the reputations of all the responsible authorities involved, needs to be put on the professional footing it deserves. Even on the relatively small numbers involved now, there are anecdotal stories of administrative matters involving mix ups. Whilst this is to be to some extent understood within a pilot phase, given the fact that this course will involve the crucial basic question of whether an individual receives a conviction which will have implications on their character, this is too reputationally significant to risk.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

1. Extending the Scheme

- Now that the scheme is functioning, there is no reason why it cannot be extended to the whole County. The Crime and Disorder partnerships in Bassetlaw and South Nottingham have indicated that they would support this.
- Framework has confirmed that they can accommodate additional demand, and that they have the flexibility to offer additional venues other than the existing City base.
- The Probation Trust has indicated that they would support this, and it has no implications on any other bodies.
- In order to provide a robust and effective administration of the scheme will require the appointment of an administrator by them.
- Framework is confident that after this period, they could support this post through their income generation process and through mainstreaming the then income created by the scheme itself.

Recommendation One

That the scheme be extended to the whole County.

Recommendation Two

The Substance Misuse Strategy Commissioning Group has recommended that funding be allocated from the Substance Misuse budget, as it fulfils the aims and objectives of the strategy.

2. Broadening the Offences covered by the Scheme

- The current offences are quite narrow, namely Drunk and Disorderly, Drunk and Incapable, and Using Threatening or Insulting Language or Behaviour Section 5 Public Order Act.
- Other schemes have successfully extended the remit to include:
 - Minor criminal damage where alcohol is a significant contributing factor.
 - Possession of controlled drugs where alcohol is a significant factor or the offence takes place within the night time economy or within licensed premises generally.

- Section 4 Public Order Act where alcohol is a significant factor.
- This will have no impact on overall recorded crime figures, or on the detections thereof.
- This will allow more scope for Restorative Justice.

Recommendation Three

That the scheme be extended to the offences outlined above.

3. Inclusion of Pubwatch

Pubwatch schemes exist across the County, and deal with a large number of people who have caused problems within licensed premises. Pubwatch schemes have the capability to ban people for up to three years within that locality.

In Mansfield and Ashfield alone, there are 250 people banned from Licensed Premises. The process by which an individual can be readmitted to the schemes' premises varies, but attendance on this course could be very easily made a condition of remittance, would be of great benefit to the Licensees themselves, and extend the scope of the cohort.

Additionally, when an individual receives a criminal conviction for conduct or actions within a Licensed Premises, the relevant Pubwatch scheme will consider whether that individual should be banned, additionally to any criminal sanction the court imposes.

Attendance on a scheme would be an added benefit to achieve the aims of the strategy.

Recommendation Four

That the Pubwatch be included on a City and County wide basis, to include individuals in those categories above.

4. Conditional Cautions

The scheme could be extended to include all persons who would be the subject of a Conditional Caution, whatever its nature, if a contributory factor is alcohol. Successful attendance and completion of the course could be made a condition for receiving the caution.

This would be relatively easy to introduce, would enhance the overall impact of the caution, and lead to reduced reoffending rates.

Recommendation Five

That Conditional Cautions for relevant offences be included in the scheme.

CONCLUSION

Whilst these proposals may appear to be very focussed on the criminal justice system, they actually are clearly tilted to a public health approach, in that they seek to actually change behaviour over a longer period.

I strongly recommend that these proposals are supported and implemented as soon as possible, with a significant communication plan to maximise the impact.

Adrian J.J.Pearson
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| Budget proposal for the extension of the Nottinghamshire Diversion Scheme | | |
| Administrator | £17000 + NI and pension and on costs @20% | £20400 |
| Trainer | £350 per session +VAT(24 sessions over one year) | £10080 |
| Laptop, Power Click Projector | | £2250 |
| Mileage for trainer | .45p per mile | £1200 per year |
| Tea Coffee etc | | £150.00 per year |
| Leaflet production | | £250.00 |
| Mobile | | £350.00 |
| .1 Management | | £2880 |
| Total | | £37560 |
| Overheads at 15% | | £43194 |