

West-end Is Safer and Healthier (WISH)

Changing our relationship with alcohol

Introduction

Earlier this year, Paisley West and Central Community Council asked various departments of Renfrewshire Council, the Community Health Partnership, Renfrewshire Community Health Initiative (RCHI), the Police, local schools, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue and local elected members to support them in trying to change the way that alcohol affects lives in the West-end of Paisley. Together, they agreed to seek the views and opinions of local residents about how drinking alcohol could be made more positive and less harmful, and to get them involved in the process.

As a result, a small community-led working group organised an event in St Mary's Church Hall, Newton Street, on Tuesday 13th September, 2011. Invitations were extended via a 2,500 West-end leaflet drop and high profile media coverage. Despite inclement weather, a representative cross-section of more than forty residents participated and an MSP and local councillors were also in attendance.

Some of the local west-enders taking part in discussions



Consultation

In her introduction, the Director of Public Health for Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Dr Linda de Caestecker, emphasised the effects and costs of alcohol harm and stayed to participate in the subsequent discussion. Using the KETSO method of consultation, five groups of participants were invited to consider:

- What's good about the West End of Paisley?
- What's good about where and when people drink alcohol in the West End of Paisley?
- What ideas do you have now for how we could do things differently in the area to make things better around alcohol?
- What are the main challenges or barriers to these ideas?
- How, thinking of a brighter future, do you think we can overcome some of the barriers or challenges?

Each group was then invited to list their top three priorities for further action.

At the conclusion, the organisers agreed to:-

- Record all the groups' comments
- Submit the community's views and wishes to the support agencies for consideration and action
- Report back on how the support agencies propose to respond

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Summary

The following issues, conclusions and recommendations emerged from the event:

Community

Several mentioned that the West End was generally **friendly**, possessed a **good community spirit**, a **variety of shops**, with **low cost of living** and facilities that include **Ferguslie Gardens**, a **good mixture of culture and people** and **significant history**. **Close proximity to the Town Centre** and **good transport links** are other positives. It was suggested that the **community should express their views more forcefully to elected representatives**. There should be **more community social activities**, where available, utilising disused premises.



Education

The existence of **two primary schools** and their participation in the event was appreciated. However, it was thought more could be done to improve **education of parents and children**, and **reinforced early** at secondary level.

Law Enforcement

The introduction of **dedicated, well-known community police officers** was welcomed, as was their **effective response to drinking in public**.

However, there are perceptions by some that they **lack visibility**, particularly in addressing anti-social behaviour and in the vicinity of pubs. **Greater protection of staff** from those presenting at the A & E Department was mentioned.

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Summary contd.....

Pubs

There was thought to be a **good choice of pubs**. However, it was suggested that they should develop **more family-friendly facilities** and **organised social events**. Increased availability of food, tea, coffee and **other non-alcoholic drinks** was also suggested. They should be **encouraged to participate** in the alcohol awareness project.

Off-licenses

There was concern that **access to alcohol was too easy** and ways of **limiting** it should be pursued. The lobbying power of the **drinks industry** and **supermarkets** was a concern. **Local supermarket management** should be engaged to help promote the alcohol awareness initiative



Youth

The conversion/use of **premises** where young people can hang out with **non-alcoholic drinks** was one suggestion.

Licensing Board

It was thought the Licensing Board should **take more account of the local community's views** and be more transparent. **Youth** should be encouraged to participate in the Licensing Forum



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Perceived Barriers

Community apathy, lack of facilities and funds were highlighted several times. Bureaucratic slow response to community issues was also mentioned.



SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

