

**Summary of the first London Forum for Alcohol Practitioners
Friday 20 March 2009, London Living Room, City Hall**

Delivery of the [regional priorities for alcohol](#) requires the engagement and commitment of the many agencies and individuals with the responsibility and expertise to reduce alcohol related harm. As a way of supporting this, it has been agreed by the Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance (GLADA) and the Joint Action Group for Alcohol in London (JAG) that two Forums for practitioners working in the alcohol-associated fields will be held each year. The forums will focus on practice and delivery, and provide a pool of knowledge, skills and expertise to support the JAG and strategic group.

This paper provides an overview of the first Forum for Alcohol Practitioners, held on 20 March 2009 at City Hall. It includes an outline of the day's presentations, a summary of key themes from the facilitated table discussions and evaluation form feedback.

Format of the day

The Forum was structured into three sessions; the first session providing an update on national and regional policy and research, second session looking at approaches to reducing alcohol harm for children and young people and the third providing an opportunity for facilitated table discussions. In addition, Ruth Fowler provided an outline of the regional statement of priorities, including the role of the JAG and Practitioners' Forum. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the final programme.

Session one presentations included:

- David Chater, Substance Misuse Team Leader at DCSF, outlining the Chief Medical Officer's guidance on alcohol consumption for children and young people.
- Hajir Mir, Alcohol Concern, looking at the role of alcohol education in preventing harm.
- James Cleverly, Chair of London Assembly Health and Public Services committee. James outlined the London Assembly investigation into alcohol misuse amongst young people in London. This report is due to be published in June 2009.
- The GLA peer outreach team who are supporting the development of the above report by consulting young people. This presentation covered differences in alcohol consumption between outer and inner London, underage sales, education, media influences and issues of personal safety.

Questions following this session focused on the role of parental drinking patterns, diversionary activities, the legal age limit and screening and brief interventions for young people.

In the second session, Sam Cox from the NTA provided an overview of the NTA's role in relation to alcohol and commissioning young people's treatment. Unfortunately the other two speakers programmed for this session could not attend.

Feedback from facilitated table discussions

Eight facilitated table discussions were held in the afternoon with approximately 10 attendees on each. Feedback on these discussions is set out in Appendix B of this paper. Key themes from the discussions were that having a Regional Statement of Priorities gives alcohol a welcomed profile but that practitioners would like that statement to have more enforcement power. The Practitioners' Forum itself was welcomed and there was encouragement for similar meetings to be held more frequently. The best use of the Forum was considered to be using them to profile good practice and including a range of speaking and interactive sessions. In terms of how the JAG and Practitioners Forum supports key issues raised around alcohol use and children and young people, it was strongly felt that there was need for greater consistency across boroughs that could be supported by the development of working protocols/ minimum set of information/ guidelines. There was also a call for the development of a screening tool for young people that could be used across London and for the JAG to provide support with community engagement.

Feedback from evaluation forms

Forty-five evaluation forms were completed out of an attendance of approximately eighty delegates. Twenty-three people fed back that the content of the programme was very good to excellent, and 15 ticked good and 6 okay. In terms of how useful the event was, 12 stated very, 13 mostly, 13 quite and 3 a little. The venue and facilities were rated very highly.

Responses to what was most helpful/ relevant included speeches from different agencies particularly the peer outreach team, the afternoon discussion groups (with comments stating that they allowed people to express issues and barriers and gain greater insight into their work), opportunity to network with other agencies, understand policy development, update on national and regional policy, and opportunity to learn about GLADA and the regional context. In terms of what was least relevant/ helpful, delegates fed back the unfortunate issue of speakers cancelling. This issue fed into other comments, such as that not enough information was provided on best practice and that the presentations did not focus enough on front line staff. Other comments included that it would be more useful to have had the presentations broken up with discussion and that there was lack of information on how to put things into practice with reduced resources.

In terms of what was learnt at the event the following was recorded:

- Better understanding of alcohol services for young people
- Better understanding of issues affecting alcohol workers
- Information on where to find research
- Work of the London Assembly and Government Office for London
- New working opportunities, such as through the JAG and Regional Priorities
- A regional perspective/ finding out what is happening in London
- Learning from other practitioners
- Latest data, statistics and trends
- The usefulness of peer involvement

- NTA perspective and education and prevention agenda

Practitioners noted the following in terms of what they would like to see in future events:

- Follow up on issues raised
- More information on family interventions
- Sharing best practice from different boroughs
- Focus on how a strategic drive can directly improve front line services
- Screening and brief interventions
- Information on health education and social marketing
- Drug and alcohol treatment in prisons and impact on families
- Combination of alcohol use with cannabis use
- Addressing diversity and meeting needs of diverse communities
- 18-25 year old prevention and treatment programmes for alcohol
- Improve/ diversifying the Night Time Economy
- A mixed event that includes the media, alcohol industry and client representatives alongside alcohol and health practitioners.

Appendix A

London Forum for Alcohol Practitioners
9.30am-4pm, Friday 20 March 2009, London Living Room, City Hall
Supporting children and young people

Programme

- 9.15-9.45 Registration and refreshments in the London Living Room
- 9.45-9.55 **Introduction** - Paul Jenkins, Chair of the Joint Action Group for Alcohol (JAG)
- 9.55-10.10 **Overview of the Regional Statement of Priorities and the Joint Action Group for Alcohol** - Ruth Fowler, Government Office for London (GOL)
- 10.10-11.10 **Update on national and regional policy and research**
David Chater, Team Leader on Substance Misuse, Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF)
Hajra Mir, Youth Training Coordinator, Alcohol Concern
James Cleverly, Chair of the London Assembly Health and Public Services Committee
Elvige Pouli, Vanya Cunningham, Yusef Ayoob, GLA Peer Outreach Team
- 11.10-11.30 Question and comments
- 11.30-11.45 Refreshment break
- 11.45-12.40 **Approaches to reducing alcohol harm for children and young people**
Laura Necchi-Ghin, Alcohol Worker, and Alison Stewart, Children's Worker, Family Alcohol Service
Sam Cox, Deputy Regional Manager, National Treatment Agency (NTA)
Alex Hall, Spark, Drugs and Alcohol Services for London
- 12.40-1.00 Questions and comments
- 1.00-2.00 Lunch
- 2.00-3.00 **Facilitated table discussions**
Please sit on the table with the number as indicated on your delegate badge.
- 3.00-3.15 Feedback from table discussions
- 3.15-3.30 **Round up and close** - Alex Bax, Chair of Greater London Drug and Alcohol Alliance (GLADA)
- 3.30-4.00 Further networking opportunity
- 4.00 Event ends

Appendix B Summary of facilitated table discussions

What does the regional statement mean to you?

- Recognition that alcohol is being given the same priority as drugs.
- It will reinforce good work taking place and help communicate messages around alcohol.
- Give weight to individuals raising alcohol on the agenda at other meetings and with other sectors.
- Acknowledges everyone needs to take responsibility for alcohol education and reducing alcohol related harm.
- What it can deliver is limited owing to funding and resources.
- Requires more enforcement. Need for senior management to engage with this work and ensure that its recommendations filter down.

What would you like to get out from attending the forum?

- Actions to take away and for practitioners to be asked to feedback on these actions.
- Profile practical examples of running projects, such as how they are established and what makes them successful.
- Profile ideas that can be taken away and replicated in other boroughs.
- Opportunity for discussion.
- Opportunity to network.
- Information gathering/ find out what other services are available.
- Explore how to involve and engage BME communities, LGBT young people, older people, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Recognise practitioners expertise
- Variation between speakers and table discussions

How can the JAG and Practitioners Forum support some of the issues raised in the morning presentations?

- Set a minimum framework for levels and standards of treatment across boroughs, including across prisons.
- Provide clear and consistent guidelines on young people alcohol use.
- Rolling out of screening and brief interventions.
- Coordinated campaign targeting parents.
- Clearer referral pathways supported by more partnership engagement
- Make the case for pooling resources across boroughs, such as for tier 3 and tier 4 provision.
- Involve the media to get messages out into the wider community.
- Engage and work with the industry, using them to campaign and educate.
- Involve young people in developing education messages/ services.
- Support the role of alcohol education in schools.
- Support work across borough boundaries
- Get involved with Alcohol Awareness week.
- Develop a screening tool that is used across London
- Share learning from the peer outreach project (*the London Assembly Health and Public Service Select committee report*) across boroughs, particularly youth offending teams.
- Empower young people who are not drinking harmfully to deliver more peer outreach work.

- Make Hidden Harm a cross cutting priority across themes.
- Identify opportunities to integrate alcohol support into existing services.
- Support services to be accessible.
- Develop a central database for services in all boroughs.
- Support young people transitional services affected by parental substance misuse.
- Continuity of this group – with a focus on children, young people and alcohol as a sub forum.
- Raise focus on alcohol treatment in prisons.
- Increase staff training around screening and brief intervention.
- Support workforce development of practitioners delivering diversionary activities for young people (for example, support around setting boundaries).
- Promote London Analysis Support Site (LASS)
- Clear structure to feed up and back down
- Bulletins and newsletters

Other comments:

- Two forum meetings a year is not enough.
- Useful to also engage with GPs and child minders

