

How might a child rights approach help in reducing alcohol-related harm?

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This talk

- Case
- Impact and scale of the problem
- Broader context
- What do children and young people think?
- UNCROC
- An UNCROC-based approach to alcohol harm minimisation at a local level.

Case

- 17 yr woman
- Streets since 15
- IYB
- Alcohol and drug use
- Pregnant 6/40
- Arrested for willful damage

How did this happen?

Likely outcome in 2012?

What can we do now?



Impact of alcohol on children & young people

- Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- Second-hand effects on others - effect of parent/caregiver alcohol misuse on children:
 - Increased risk of SUDI, abuse & neglect, injury, psychological/behavioural disorders, substance misuse later in life
 - affects parenting capacity (responding to a child's emotional needs and providing appropriate care, supervision, and guidance), causes conflict and violence, and affects living conditions and family functioning Girling et al., 2006, Families Commission: Wellington
- Direct harm for the drinker – alcohol intoxication/poisoning, injury, mental illness

Impact of alcohol on children & young people cont.....

- Contributes to inequalities – associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and marginalisation, disproportionately affects Maori
- High social and economic cost to the taxpayer and society
 - Alcohol is a major risk factor for burden of disease - estimated to cost more than 1% of GDP (Casswell, Lancet)
 - the cost to NZ of alcohol-related injuries to innocent victims estimated to be more than half a billion dollars per year
 - Connor, Casswell, The burden of road trauma due to other people's drinking. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 2009. 41(5): p. 1099-1103

Broader context

Effects on families

- Poverty
- Family Violence
- Parents with mental illness
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Chaotic and dysfunctional families
- Colonisation and loss of traditional supports

Influences on governments

- World financial crisis
- Informed public & media
- Rising acute demand, ageing population, costs of care
- Widespread acceptance/ tolerance of the above
- Public resistance to government intrusion into private lives
- Alcohol Industry

Broader context - the alcohol environment

- Drinking patterns among adults and youth are shaped by wider factors:
 - Sophisticated marketing and sponsorship practices of the alcohol industry
 - cheap pricing and easy availability of alcohol
 - the extent of drink-driving counter-measures
 - adult role-modelling of drinking behaviours
 - social norms around alcohol
- Alcohol producers have consolidated and globalised – international market dominated by a few large corporations. The alcohol industry is using tactics similar to those of the tobacco industry to undermine the development of an appropriate and effective response to a serious public health threat.

Casswell, S. and T. Thamarangsi, *Reducing harm from alcohol: call to action*. The Lancet, 2009. **373**(9682): p. 2247-2257.



What do children and young people think?

***“What’s never focused on
is the fact that children and
young people are the
victims...”***

Young Person, Green Paper Survey YPRG 2012

- The 'Second-Hand Effects of Alcohol' on Babies, Children and Young People need to be the focus of decision making
- New Zealand Culture has to change as a whole for any teen drinking culture to change

Media influence and Expectations

“Teenagers can’t drink responsibly”

“Teenagers should not drink responsibly”

**'What's never focused on is the fact that children and young people
are the victims'**

Young Person, YPRG Green Paper Survey 2012

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Violence In Families and the Community

- Violent people are more aggressive when intoxicated
- Physical abuse in families is usually directed towards children
- Violence between young people is more prevalent when alcohol is involved
- Children feel unsafe and scared in their homes and communities if alcohol-fueled violence is present

'What's never focused on is the fact that children and young people are the victims'

What Can We Do?

- That the second hand effects of alcohol be openly condemned by Government and similar strategies to the “second hand smoking” campaign be implemented
- An awareness campaign be funded by government and facilitated by government organisations
- That new laws are put in place, such as raising the price of alcohol and reducing the alcohol limit
- Funding educational programs about the second-hand effects of alcohol for primary and secondary schools
- Distributing media that informs New Zealanders about the effects of second- hand drinking.
- Removing alcohol advertising and sponsorship from sports, public events and other cultural activities.

Is This Ok?



You can read our full submission on the Second Hand Effects of Alcohol to Children and Young people for the Green Paper on Vulnerable Children at www.occ.org.nz/media_speeches_and_submissions/submissions



UNCROC

- Comprehensive set of 54 articles against which governments and organisations that care for children and their families can be measured.
- Ratified by the New Zealand Government in 1993.

UNCROC



- Protect children from discrimination
- Make children's interests paramount
- Ensure children's rights to be heard
- Ensure to the maximum extent the survival and development of the child
- Protect children from all forms of violence, injury and abuse
- Ensure appropriate prenatal and postnatal care for mothers

UNCROC cont.....

- Ensure children's rights to rest, leisure and play
- Ensure disabled children's active participation in their community
- Develop primary and preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services
- Services at standards agreed by experts.

An UNCROC-based response to local policy on alcohol- related harm



**Start by agreeing our values and what they
mean practically, for this project/ issue**

- ALL children have these rights
 - No child left behind, no parent stands alone
- Discrimination
 - Equity of *outcome*
- Paramountcy
 - When interests of adults and children conflict,
children 1st

An UNCROC-based response cont....

- Survival & development
 - Do the things that matter first
- Free from abuse
 - Clinician skills for 2012 – DV, behaviour, D&A, MH
- Standards agreed by experts
 - What will we actually do? Where do we not compromise?
- Children's views valued
 - How do children's voices inform policy/service design/ delivery/ evaluation?

NB – no additional cost, but substantial benefit in improved outcomes

Summary

- UNCROC is useful
 - Describes how the world should be for children
 - Gives a set of values and principles useful at a policy level and for designing, delivering and evaluating services
- There are solutions in our hands, if choose to take them
- Often these do not require more money, just more leadership.

Thank you