

# Alcohol Impact | Final Summary Report Pilot year

**Alcohol Impact, managed and delivered by NUS, is a programme designed to change behaviours by creating a social norm of responsible alcohol consumption at a key moment of change in students' lives. The programme offers a mix of innovative, institution-wide behaviour change approaches and interventions encompassing policy, procedure, campaigns, retailing, and accommodation. The programme encourages strong links with local stakeholders, extending the potential for impact and legacy. These approaches form the basis of a framework for action, with achievements in these areas resulting in accreditation. This report provides a summary of actions and achievements over the pilot year (April 2014 to April 2015), of the programme.**

## 1. Introduction

The overarching aim for this work has been to create and implement a whole-institution approach to holistic behaviour change model in universities to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder, and promote responsible drinking, amongst the student population.

At the backbone of the programme are the accreditation criteria<sup>1</sup>, formulated in a collaborative process between NUS, the programme's advisory board, and the pilot partnerships. Delivery of the accreditation criteria at the pilot partnerships is supported centrally by NUS, for example through the development of an [online presence/hub](#) hosting resources and information and through the provision of individual support from the programme manager. The accreditation process culminates in a student-led audit process, overseen by NUS, which took place during March and April 2015, with results and achievements celebrated at a [national event](#) in June 2015.

## 2. Achievements

Working in partnership, students' union and university representatives, along with community organisations such as emergency services, local authorities and third sector organisations, have driven a wealth of activity across the different areas of the accreditation:

- 7 pilot partnerships have achieved accreditation<sup>2</sup>
- Partnerships have completed a total of 280 criteria
- 12,500 students responded to the pre, mid, and post-wave surveys
- 2,970 students actively engaged through the programme
- 99,042 students reached through the programme
- 116 sports clubs and societies engaged
- 22 student auditors have been trained, aiding with the delivery of the programme alongside the opportunity to develop employability skills

## 3. Programme Development

To support the development of the programme, NUS has convened two advisory boards. The Alcohol Impact Advisory Board and Academic Advisory Board have attracted representation at a senior level. These boards will continue to support the programme into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The accreditation framework is made up of 46 mandatory and optional criteria, each scored according to difficulty and impact. Accreditation is set at 60% of the 181 points available.

<sup>2</sup> The pilot partnerships include students' union and university representation at the universities of Brighton, Liverpool John Moores, Loughborough, Manchester Metropolitan, Nottingham, Royal Holloway and Swansea. A control institution, the University of Central Lancashire, participated in the three waves of survey research.

Following the launch in March 2014, the Alcohol Impact has achieved widespread, positive media coverage both at national and local levels. 40 pieces of local media coverage and 15 national pieces featured the programme, for example Good Morning Britain (audience reach c.800,000).

Former Minister of State for Crime Prevention, Norman Baker MP (2013-14) also attended two ministerial visits to pilot partnerships. These visits attracted significant media attention with interviews with Brighton University students, Brighton Students' Union and the minister shown on Sky News Radio (more than 280 stations make up the network, including well-known brands such as Absolute Radio, Capital, Classic, Heart, Magic, Real, Smooth and talkSPORT - weekly audience of c.34 million).

#### 4. Interventions

Each partnership has delivered at least one innovative intervention which addresses cultural norms surrounding alcohol consumption in higher education. The interventions were developed to be bespoke to particular issues experienced at each of the partnerships and were developed using the [ISM<sup>3</sup>](#) practical tool. Below are three illustrative examples:

**Brighton University and Students' Union:** Addressing pre-drinking by providing a space, food and entertainment to "pre-meet" before heading to town for the weekly student night through a partnership with [Red Frogs](#).

- Engagement targets have been exceeded beyond the original aim of 30-40 students per week, with 130 – 200 students attending alcohol free Red Frog events each week.

**Loughborough University and Students' Union:** Are aiming to encourage responsible consumption through asserting personal limits and gaining respect from peers. A [film](#) has been produced alongside a series of alcohol-free events. Work has also taken place to address preconceptions that university life revolves around alcohol consumption.

- There has been a 40% reduction in students being 'rejected' from venues on campus due to irresponsible drinking.<sup>4</sup>
- Data gathered on alcohol-related welfare incidents by the university has seen a reduction in 2014/15 compared with the previous year.
- Non-drink led events have doubled during the autumn term, from 50 to 100. Over 1,000 students participated in these events

**Manchester Metropolitan University and Students' Union:** This intervention specifically targets students living in three roads in Manchester associated with large scale parties during 2013/14. Police figures show that 40% of victims of crime in the south Manchester area are students. A [short film](#) has been produced featuring Greater Manchester Police and Fire services, Manchester City Council and landlords to encourage students to consider personal safety and household security. Information gathered from Greater Manchester Police shows a decrease in incidents of burglary from a property and of robbery of personal property, however the data also shows an increase in sexual offences and theft from person when comparing 2013 to 2014<sup>5</sup>.

#### 5. Key research findings

Whilst the changes uncovered begin to suggest that Alcohol Impact will contribute to new discourses around alcohol consumption, and the evolution of a new set of practices around drinking, and students' union-based activities, ongoing monitoring of attitudes and behaviours will identify whether the changes are part of a wider trend towards lower or more responsible consumption, a reflection of the timing within the academic year, characteristics of the current cohort of students, or a result of holistic action on responsible consumption as a result of Alcohol

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<sup>3</sup> A tool based on theory and evidence which shows that three different contexts - Individual, Social and Material - influence people's behaviours and hypothesises that targeting influences across these contexts achieves substantive and long lasting change.

<sup>4</sup> Further research would be needed to fully understand causes of these changes.

<sup>5</sup> The Partnership are continuing to track these changes.

Impact. 12,500 respondents have completed the surveys carried out at pre-, mid- and post-wave with the following changes identified:

### **Alcohol consumption**

Changes<sup>6</sup> in the frequency of alcohol consumption have been uncovered:

- Respondents at the pilot partnerships and control institution reporting to drink less often at the post-wave survey compared to the mid-wave and pre-wave surveys. The average number of units and drinks consumed in the week prior to survey also decreased.
- Focusing specifically on pre-drinking, when looking at the pilot partnerships together, there has been a decrease in respondents stating that they regularly deliberately get drunk at home before a night out at both mid-wave and post-wave surveys in comparison to pre-wave at the pilot institutions. No change was seen at the control institution between mid and pre-wave surveys, however a decrease was seen in the follow-up survey<sup>7</sup>.
- Respondents show a change in their ability to understand the influence alcohol has on them, those from the pilot partnerships show a reduction in the frequency of unintentional drunkenness between pre-wave and mid- and post-wave surveys. A similar change is seen at the control institution.
- Responses from students at the pilot partnerships also reveal a decrease in agreement at the post-wave compared to the two earlier waves of surveying, that getting drunk means they will have a good night out. This change was also seen at the control institution.

### **Drinking culture in higher education**

It is possible to hypothesise at this point that involvement in interventions designed to encourage responsible alcohol consumption has an effect on attitudes towards drinking.

- Those who identify as having participated in interventions or campaigns designed to encourage responsible alcohol consumption (at both pilots and control at the mid- and post-wave surveys) are significantly more likely to strongly agree that they don't need alcohol to have a good night out than those who haven't.
- At the pilot institutions, respondents who have participated in interventions are also more likely to indicate that they think more about their behaviour when they drink than they used to at the post-wave survey compared to mid-wave.
- There has been a small but significant increase amongst respondents from across the pilots between all three waves of research, who are in disagreement that 'drinking and getting drunk is part of university culture'. This change is also seen at the control at the post-wave survey.
- Ongoing research associated with Alcohol Impact will help to verify these findings as currently no change has been exhibited in perception that 'it is almost expected that students will drink to get drunk' between pre-, mid- and post-wave surveys for either pilots or control institutions.

### **Impacts of alcohol consumption - Crime and anti-social behavior**

In its pilot year, Alcohol Impact has included a focus on perpetration and experience of crime and anti-social behaviour. Examples of changes that have occurred at the pilots but not control include:

- A significant decrease in reports of experiencing verbal abuse.<sup>8</sup>
- Whilst perpetration of damage to property has shown a significant reduction at the pilot partnerships there has been a significant increase in experience of this issue as a 'victim'. Hypotheses behind this discrepancy include an increased focus on this issue at some pilots, raising expectations around what behaviour is acceptable.

Other changes that have occurred across both pilots and control include:

- Small but significant reduction in reported experiences of getting into a fight / argument with people you know and with strangers between pre-wave and post-wave surveys.

<sup>6</sup> All changes reported are statistically significant at 95% or above.

<sup>7</sup> Pre-drinking appears less prevalent at the control institution at both points of surveying.

<sup>8</sup> The control showed a significant increase between pre-wave and mid-wave responses.

- Significant increase in respondents reporting to have stolen anything from anyone or anywhere<sup>9</sup>. No respondents reported this experience at pre-wave however 2.8% (n=104) respondents from pilot partnerships and 2.8% (n=12) respondents from the control reported this behaviour at mid-wave. This increase is maintained at post-wave.
- An increase in reported experience of sexual assault between pre-wave and post-wave. Further research is necessary to identify the extent to which this is an increase in perpetration or the result of widespread action across university campuses to campaign for zero tolerance to sexual harassment encouraging more open reporting of experiences.

### **Impacts of alcohol consumption – Health**

For the majority of indicators there are significant decreases in reported experiences between pre-wave and post-wave. These changes are reflected in both pilot and control institutions suggesting that the changes may be part of a wider change around student attitudes and behaviours relating to alcohol, or a reflection of changing behaviours throughout the academic year. However, some instances exist where changes have been reported at the pilot partnerships but not at the control include:

- A reduction in experience of memory loss/being unable to remember what happened the night before at both pilots and control.
- Decrease in reports of putting themselves in risky situations at both pilot partnerships and control institution.
- A reduction in the proportion of respondents who report engaging in unprotected sex has fluctuated at the pilot partnerships (showing an initial decrease between pre and mid wave, but then an increase at the post-wave). No change has been reported at the control institution.

## **6. Legacy**

With relatively low input, and over a short timescale, Alcohol Impact has developed into a leading edge programme that has engaged a diversity of stakeholders, from students to members of parliament.

**Convening and engaging power at multiple levels:** At a programme level the imagination of senior stakeholders from the sector has been captured, demonstrated by ministerial visits and high level representation at the programme's advisory board. In each partnership, evaluation research has highlighted Alcohol Impact's role as a focal point around which those working on alcohol within the student body, university management, academic staff, local government, social and care services, the private sector and community members have come together. Often this has been for the first time – increasing the potential for cross-cutting social and systemic change. Looking further into the programme, action taken to complete the criteria reveals the potential for Alcohol Impact to engage vast swathes of the student population in the responsible consumption agenda, with approximately 100,000 students reached, and approximately 3,000 actively engaged.

**Strong evidence base:** A key feature of the pilot year has been the accompanying research programme. Small but significant changes in some of the measures being used to track drinking, irresponsible drinking and experiences around crime and antisocial behaviour amongst students have been uncovered. Whilst the limited duration of the programme and pervasiveness of alcohol within UK and HE culture historically suggest that these changes seem unlikely to have arisen from Alcohol Impact, the shifts do appear significant in some cases when considering the changes also seen in a control institution. Going forward from this, Alcohol Impact's role will be to build on the body of evidence captured during the pilot year in order to understand these changes, along with celebrating and accelerating the progress being made towards reframing alcohol consumption within higher education.

**Development and expansion:** The success of the pilot programme has captured the attention of stakeholders from across the higher education sector. To support this interest, a development plan which sees the programme move to a self-financing membership model has been created.

<sup>9</sup> For example a wallet, money, or goods from a friend or stranger, or from someone's home, the university or a business