

Local alcohol strategies - a bluffer's guide For emergency use only!!!

By Libby Ranzetta

Introduction

So you've been asked to write an alcohol harm reduction strategy by the end of March, but a) you haven't got any time to do it, and b) you don't really know where to start. Clearly, it's an impossible task.



Don't panic!! Help is at hand. Follow this guide and you might just get out of jail free.

Why do you have to do an alcohol strategy?

First things first: the law now says CDRPs (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) have to have a strategy to address alcohol-related crime and disorder by the end of March 2008. So you must do that.

(Ideally, your alcohol strategy will also look at alcohol-related health harms and alcohol and young

people. That's what the government wants to see, and you may be under pressure from your regional Government Office to do it. But you don't *have* to include health and young people; they can't lock you up for not doing it.

Most alcohol strategies do cover community safety, health and young people. If you had time you could check out the guidance on this – a special toolkit¹, but you don't, so stick with the bluffer's guide.)

There may be local pressure to have an alcohol strategy too. Councillors, professionals and residents alike are worried about alcohol misuse at the moment.

Writing the alcohol strategy: introductory spiel

If you were to Google "alcohol strategy" you'd soon find a strategy with a form of words that appeals to you, and that can be adapted for your strategy. It's not really cheating; everybody does it.

¹ <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugsalcohol/drugsalcohol097.htm>

It's a good idea to include in the strategy an overview of work that is already going on to tackle alcohol-related harm. If you don't know what's going on, you could just acknowledge it briefly in the introduction eg 'whilst there is much good work taking place already to tackle alcohol-related harm, there is more we can do to coordinate our efforts and develop new responses'.

Writing the alcohol strategy: basic needs assessment

You should base your strategy on evidence of local need as far as possible.



Luckily, the North West Public Health Observatory have done most of the work for you. Go to www.nwph.net/alcohol/lape, find the data for your area and

shamelessly download as many charts, regional rankings and info as you like to make your strategy look good.

To make yourself look good, note that some of the indicators are based on proxy data and estimates,

and you could also say that an objective of the strategy is to get better local data.

If you can get data from local treatment services (probably via the Drug Action Team), all the better. The CDRP is supposed to have done a 'strategic assessment' of local crime and anti-social behaviour by the end of March 2008, and it is supposed to include alcohol-related crime. So you might get some hotspot maps or something out of that too.

Because it's too late to ask stakeholders what they think about alcohol problems in your area, that needs to be pencilled in for the future; it could be another strategy objective.

Writing the alcohol strategy: setting the objectives

Obviously the objectives should reflect local problems and needs. They should also be agreed by all the key players, which may be tricky if time is tight*. However, you probably won't go too far wrong with these:

- Reduce alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour
- Reduce alcohol-related ill-health and improve identification and treatment
- Increase levels of awareness about responsible drinking
- Reduce alcohol-related harm to children and young people

And if you really are starting from scratch, you might like these too:

- Establish a strategic framework for developing and delivering the alcohol strategy
- Improve the measurement and recording of alcohol-related harm



*So just call it a draft strategy till everyone has agreed to it.

Writing the alcohol strategy: doing the implementation plan

The strategy is nothing without an action/implementation plan. Unfortunately, you can't really bluff this bit. The actions need to be negotiated with whoever is going to be responsible for delivering them.

Without meaning to worry you, the list below shows all the elements of a good local alcohol strategy - it's drawn from the government toolkit we mentioned earlier.

So here's the plan: give yourself actions to do to get the strategy up and running! Basically, if you are starting from scratch, the only realistic actions you can sign up to are:

- Consult stakeholders on the draft strategy and get objectives agreed
- Negotiate with partner agencies what activities they will undertake as part of the strategy and agree targets with them (not as hard as it sounds; some stuff will be happening already, especially enforcement activity). There are loads of examples of activities in the aforementioned toolkit.

- Sort out a strategic framework for delivery (ie set up an alcohol steering group or something that sits under the DAT/CDRP/Health Improvement Partnership/whatever)
- And when you've done those, launch the strategy with its implementation plan and get cracking on the alcohol-harm reduction



So, you've shown you know what you're talking about when it comes to alcohol strategies, and you've shown how your strategy will be developed into a good

one. Job done.

But if you need more help, call the experts at Ranzetta Consulting on 01920 877293, email info@ranzettaconsulting.co.uk.

Table 1: elements of a good local alcohol strategy

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS
The alcohol harm reduction (AHR) strategy is overseen by a local partnership steering group
Local partners are held to account for their contribution to the AHR.
Community engagement is embedded in the AHR strategy
A wide range of activities that support the overall AHR strategy are in place
The AHR strategy contributes to the Local Area Agreement
The AHR strategy contributes to the Comprehensive Area Assessment
A system of data collection and analysis is in place for monitoring the AHR strategy
Activity within the strategy is evaluated for effectiveness, and amended accordingly
HEALTH
Identifying hazardous and harmful drinkers and providing brief advice
Providing effective, evidence-based interventions and treatment for harmful and dependent drinkers

Increasing awareness of alcohol units and the sensible drinking message
Raising awareness of the health risks caused by alcohol misuse
Collecting and sharing data about alcohol misuse
Tackling the overlap of alcohol misuse with the misuse of drugs
Reducing the impact of alcohol misuse in the workplace
Examining and tackling the links between alcohol misuse and unemployment
COMMUNITY SAFETY
Tackling crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) linked to alcohol, and alcohol-fuelled disorder
Managing alcohol misuse effectively within the Night Time Economy (NTE)
Planning the development of a balanced NTE
Tackling drink driving
Address offending behaviour patterns linked to the misuse of alcohol
Tackling domestic violence linked to the misuse of alcohol
Addressing the links between alcohol misuse and

housing issues or homelessness
Tackling sexual violence and harassment linked to alcohol use
Promoting the use of safer glassware
Preventing accidental fires and fire-related injuries
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
Raising awareness of safe and sensible alcohol consumption amongst young people
Tackling under-age sales
Tackling under-age drinking in public places
Identifying children and young people at risk of harm from alcohol misuse and referring them to relevant bodies
Providing support and treatment for children and young people with alcohol problems
Targeting parents whose drinking is causing risk to the wellbeing of children
Providing alternative activities for young people