

The Ripple Effect

Executive Summary



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Introduction

This research sought to examine through direct community consultation, whether citizens of Glasgow City felt alcohol affected their community, and if so, to identify and examine these effects.

Like the ripple effect created by a pebble in a pond the 'ripple effect' of alcohol is thought to go far beyond the individual and their immediate family. But does a ripple effect resulting from alcohol use occur in Glasgow City's communities? And if so, what are the effects and how widely are they felt?

In order to examine this effectively, volunteers were recruited from within Glasgow City's communities to become community researchers. The community members were identified through the various alcohol and drug fora across the city which are affiliated to the Communities Sub-group of the Glasgow City Addictions Planning and Implementation Group.

They were then trained in consultation and research methods before designing, planning and undertaking the research alongside professional researchers.

The community researchers used a combination of street surveys, focus groups, participatory appraisal techniques at community events, one to one interviews and more abstract methods for young people. The aim was to collect data from as many of Glasgow City's residents as possible over a three-month period. The methodology and ethos of the survey adhered to the National Standards of Community Engagement at all stages of the project.

Key Findings

The researchers consulted with 4697 people from a variety of age groups from all areas of the city:

- 99% of people felt alcohol affected their area to at least some degree
- 79% felt the effect to be medium to large or large

Main areas felt to be affected:

- Shopping areas/precincts
- Around areas where alcohol could be purchased
- Parks/waste ground and surrounding streets

Groups of people felt to be more affected:

- Young People - using alcohol/or being victims of person related crime (e.g. rape, assault)
- Elderly- intimidation/fear of going out at certain times
- Younger children - unable to play outside or in parks safely

How were communities affected?

People were asked to give examples of positive ('good') effects and negative ('bad') effects of alcohol use.

Overwhelmingly people offered examples of negative effects felt in their communities:

- Positive effects accounted for only 5% of all example effects given and were largely said only to be true if alcohol was used in moderation
- Negative effects accounted for 95% of example effects given

Twenty three separate negative effects were identified from within example statements.

The most common general negative effect stated was 'sense of safety'. Eight of the 23 negative effects identified were each noted by more than one thousand people throughout the city.

The 8 most commonly stated negative effects of alcohol use:

1. Individual's 'sense of safety' felt within community – stated by 2011 people
2. Increase in antisocial behaviour in general – 1390 people
3. Parks being 'no go' areas at night and broken and/or littered making them unusable during the day – 1339 people
4. Increase in litter throughout the community – 1239 people
5. Abuse/intimidation of general public by others (especially young people) to purchase alcohol for them – 1170 people
6. Increase in violence (general) – 1167 people
7. Increase in vandalism (general) – 1145 people
8. Increase in incidents and severity of outcomes within territorialism/gang fighting – 1041 people

The 23 negative effects identified could be further separated into two groups:

1. Occurrences within communities that residents felt had increased or become more severe in nature due to alcohol use. Effects felt to have increased due to alcohol use noted most were:

- Antisocial behaviour
- Increase in litter
- Violence both generally and within territorialism and its outcomes

2. Other general negative effects noted. Within other general effects noted the most common were:

- Park/play areas being unusable
- Intimidation of general public to buy alcohol for others

Improving things

Not all responses gathered were suggestions for improvement. 18% of all responses city wide indicated that either:

- They did not know how things could be improved (4%) or
- They felt there was no way to improve things (14%)

82% of people, however, noted at least one possible solution. Most felt a number of different actions had to be taken together or in planned stages, and actions had to be taken with long term planning and commitment. All solutions given were grouped with similar responses creating 19 separate categories. Just under half of all categories created (8), related to the sale of alcohol in some way.

The most common solutions given for improvement fell within four main headings:

- Restrictions/conditions on sale of alcohol
- Law enforcement (generally)
- Education and awareness of alcohol issues
- Inclusion through activities/employment and education for young people

Most commonly stated solutions were:

- Increase penalties for those buying/selling to young people and punishments for young people asking public to buy
- Increase police on beat and community police
- More things to do for young people in leisure time
- More education/awareness for young people

Service provision

Few people could name alcohol related services in their area and fewer could explain the activities of services named. The most noted service was Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) though few could say where meetings were held and fewer could explain their activities.

Regarding services needed, most people felt a combination of prevention and treatment services was necessary, with long-term commitment for both.

Types of service noted by most people were:

- Counselling – 1693 people
- Rehabilitation (Detox) – 1476 people
- Education and awareness – 1329 people
- Diversionary activities for young people – 1034 people
- Rehabilitation and inclusion activities – 659 people

Planning and making changes

A high level of community involvement in both planning and making changes was viewed as preferable by all those who answered this question (1382). It was also felt that changes need to be made with urgency. In more than half the responses given, ensuring community involvement was felt to be directly linked to raising awareness of the issues. Direct consultation with communities e.g. community surgeries was also felt to be needed.

Organisational involvement

The involvement of all organisations relating to communities in any way, working together and in unison, was commonly preferred. Most people identified several organisations along with a statement to this effect. These could be categorised in the following way:

- Law enforcement - 66% of respondents
- Government (local) - 59%
- Youth organisations - 53%
- Housing/planning authorities - 52%

- Local alcohol related projects - 52%
- Government (general) - 49%
- General local groups - 47%
- Local retailers - 43%
- Health service - 32%
- Media - 28%
- Social work services - 26%

Conclusions and recommendations

One of the most startling figures generated within this consultation was that 99% of people spoken to within Glasgow City felt that alcohol was having an effect on their community. It can be concluded that for many residents across the City of Glasgow the ability to live normally within their communities is negatively affected by problems and issues associated with alcohol use. It was also widely accepted that Glasgow has a drinking culture and that this culture impacts on its communities. In spite of this, it was widely believed that the culture not only could be changed, but that it had to be changed in order to improve the quality of life of those living within the City.

Whilst acknowledging that these changes would take time, and crucially would require a co-ordinated approach by all to tackle the identified issues, change was seen as achievable and would ultimately help to reduce the 'ripple effect' of alcohol upon communities.

The effects highlighted in the survey alongside the suggested solutions should now:

- ▶ Inform and direct the work of the Communities Sub-group of the Glasgow City Addictions Planning and Implementation Group and its associated alcohol and drug fora, prioritising need and identifying areas of concern
- ▶ Provide a standard reference point for communities, forums and agencies to evidence alcohol related funding bids
- ▶ Inform locality based Community Alcohol Action Plans and the alcohol action plans of individual alcohol and drug fora

These action plans should:

- ▶ Inform and direct key services to identified areas of concern
- ▶ Address the issues and solutions identified which relate to the key groups of people who are adversely affected by alcohol within Glasgow City
- ▶ Address the issues and solutions identified which relate to the key areas that are affected by alcohol within Glasgow City
- ▶ Explore further possible solutions for reducing the negative effects alcohol has upon Glasgow City's communities
- ▶ Aim to raise the knowledge and awareness of alcohol services within communities
- ▶ Aim to respond to the public perception of alcohol related service requirement

It is hoped that the findings from the survey will attract community interest to alcohol and drug fora by tackling issues identified by the community through consultation and engagement. During the consultation it became evident that people within Glasgow City's communities felt that any attempt to redress any of the highlighted negative effects would be most beneficial if residents were both informed of, and involved in, any actions taken or planned. It is essential therefore that any Community Alcohol Action Plans developed should be made available to local residents for appraisal.

Encouraging residents to be involved will help ensure suggested actions are practical and realistic for the communities in which they are to be undertaken. Being informed and involved in this final planning stage will also help residents to feel ownership of planned actions and therefore will be more likely to help ensure their success.

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**Electronic versions of The Ripple Effect
documents are available on
www.glasgowgrand.org**



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