



Dormant Accounts Fund Project 2016

Measure 4: Substance Misuse and Prevention

East Coast Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force

in partnership with

County Wicklow Community Partnership Limited.



This project was approved by Government with support from the Dormant Accounts Fund

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Acknowledgement

As Chairperson of the Steering Group, I would like to acknowledge the involvement of the many individuals and organisations who contributed to the County Wicklow Alcohol Awareness Project 2016 across the East Coast Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force area.

I would like to thank the Task Force members and, in particular, the members of the Prevention and Education committee for assisting with the development of this proposal along with the contributions and assistance of the community members, workers and staff of County Wicklow Partnership. In addition, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the staff of County Wicklow Partnership, especially Mary Millett, Aisling Byrne and Georgina O'Donovan for administering the funds and accounting processes required for this project to be delivered.

The project would not have been possible without the full support of the members of the East Coast Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force who gave of their time and energy in many ways across the many tasks and steps of this project. Specific mention needs to be given to Maeve Shanley and Ruth Graham for the additional supports and assistances to help administer and move this project forward across all stages.

A special thank you to Stephanie Power, the Project Coordinator, for her full commitment, dedication and hard work in facing the many obstacles and identifying the ways and means to get around these to deliver on the complete set of objectives and actions according to the stages of the project. Her positive outlook and drive helped achieve, in most cases over and beyond, the actions proposed and keep this project on time and on budget throughout.

Sincere thanks need to be given to the five communities of Carnew, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathnew, Roundwood and Wicklow town. The project is indebted to the many volunteers, young people and parents who gave of their time and energy to all the facets of this project and were totally absorbed and enthusiastic about their involvements. This would not have been possible without so many coming forward and engaging.

Finally, I would like to extend a particular thanks to the members of the Alcohol Awareness Project Steering Group and to their respective agencies, who gave an enormous amount of commitment, dedication and support towards the planning and implementation of the entire campaign ensuring the whole project became a reality. The individual members and agencies involved represent an excellent example of a partnership approach where knowledge and expertise is pooled together to deliver a significant and successful piece of work.

John Snell

Chairperson

County Wicklow Alcohol Awareness Steering Group

Introduction

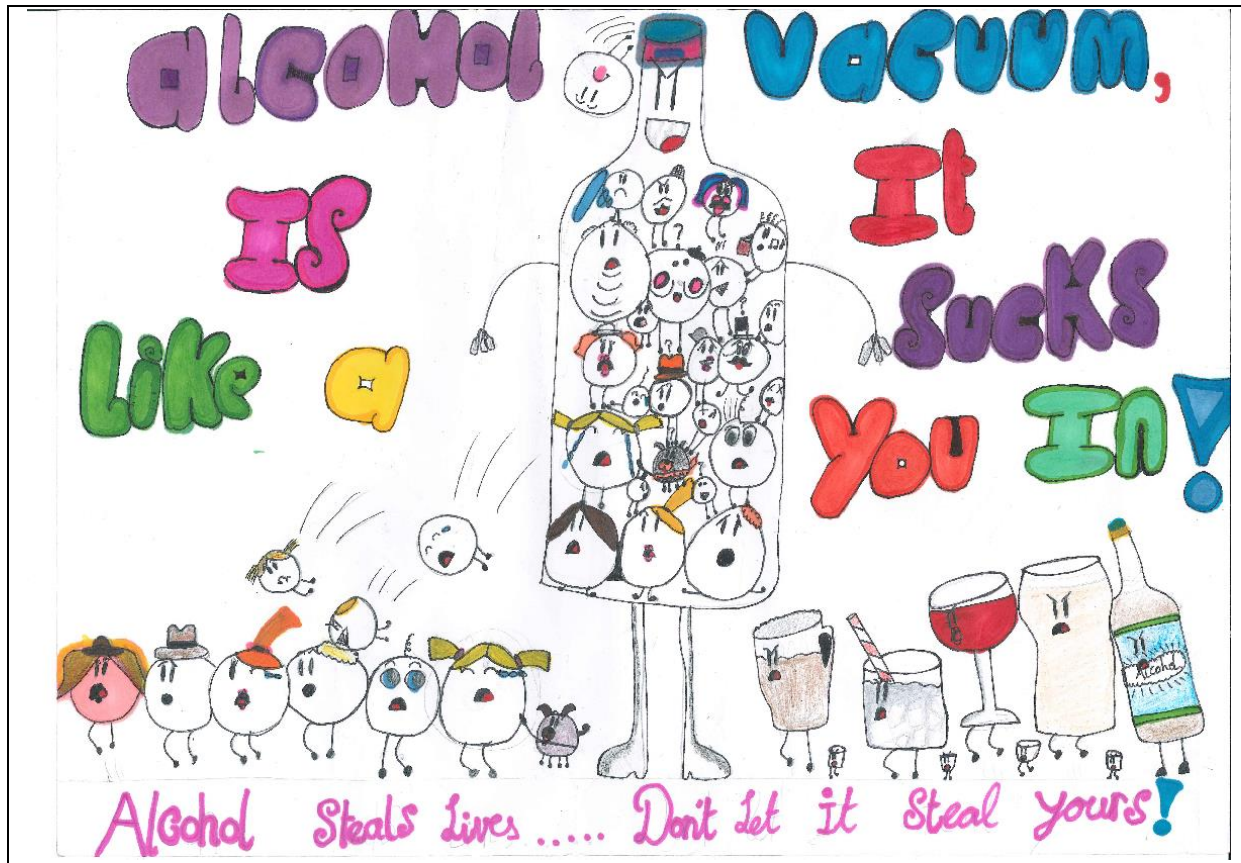
In January 2014, Minister of State with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, Alex White TD, announced that all Drugs Task Forces nationally would take on the remit of alcohol and thus, would be renamed as ‘Drugs and Alcohol Task Forces’.

Subsequently, a report by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government identified a new Disbursement Scheme approved by Government in December 2013 (DoECLG, 2014). Within this scheme, the Department of Health identified Action 28 of the National Drugs Strategy (DoCRGA, 2009) along with Actions 1 and 2 of the National Substance Misuse Strategy (DoH, 2012) for the focus of its specific measures to provide “funding of €50,000 will be available to each Task Force equating to a total of €1.2 million for 2015” (DoECLG, 2014:19). The specific actions named are listed in Table 1 below.

National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016
<p>28. Develop a sustained range of awareness campaigns that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that local and regional campaigns complement and add value to national campaigns; • optimise the use of ICT in drugs and alcohol awareness initiatives (e.g. through internet search engines and social network websites); • consider a co-ordinated approach by all key players to the development and implementation of a designated drug/alcohol awareness week/day with agreed themes and methodologies; • target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - third level educational institutions, workplaces and recreational venues; - at risk groups (Travellers, new communities, LGBTs, homeless people, prisoners and, sex workers); and - education/awareness among drug users to minimise the levels of usage and to promote harm reduction measures. <p style="text-align: right;">(DoCRGA, 2009:100)</p>
Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy, 2012 (Prevention Pillar)
<p>1. Seek greater co-ordination of prevention activities at both national and local levels. Such activities should, where feasible, utilise Information and Communication Technology and consider a social marketing approach, to target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underage drinking; • drink-related anti-social behaviour/public order offences; • excessive drinking generally; • those who are pregnant or likely to become pregnant; and • other specific at-risk groups
<p>2. Further develop a co-ordinated approach to prevention and education interventions in relation to alcohol and drugs as a co-operative effort between all stakeholders in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational institutions (including third level); • sporting organisations; • community services; • youth organisations and services; and • workplaces <p style="text-align: right;">(DoH, 2012:46)</p>

Table 1: Actions to be prioritised in the project

The above measure was finally agreed, announced and became open to application in June 2015. All applications had to adhere to a strict process and be lodged electronically by mid-July 2015. Decisions for the Task Force measures were scheduled to be issued in November and December 2015 for initiatives which must commence and complete during 2016.



Campaign Winning Image

Commencement of the Initiative

Working Together with a clear Memorandum of Understanding

To be eligible, all applicants had to have a legal status or be a statutory body. In this regard, the East Coast Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force was unable to apply in their own name. However, it negotiated with County Wicklow Community Partnership Limited who agreed to receive the funds and administer these in accordance with Pobal criteria. This also led to a more community focused approach with input from community development workers across the region and opportunities for follow on work when the initiative completed. The Task Force remains very grateful to County Wicklow Partnership for their agreeing to this arrangement where they provided expertise and experience in reporting and accounting practices for such funding without being granted any specific overhead costs for this service.

Local Consultation Period

In order to determine the most appropriate response for the East Coast Region, a consultation process was undertaken to meet with key stakeholders within the community so that they could advise on both the current situation and what could be undertaken to achieve the best results and address the issues which would maximise the impact of any and all interventions. The project criteria were disseminated to all and were discussed at length with the Task Force members and numerous extra committee meetings where members of the Prevention and Education committee specifically were encouraged to provide input. After all suggestions and discussions were taken into consideration, a clear direction was agreed which had a clear aim and objectives and where the target audience was identified. At this point, the main development group began the process of detailing the project stages and outputs required to achieve each of the goals of the initiative. It was also agreed to convene a separate project steering group which would support and assist the initiative through each stage.

Engagement with young people and those working and parenting them was chosen as the most effective path to follow. The approach was to proceed to as per the 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures' report (DCYA, 2014), where issues like "support parents" and using an "earlier intervention and prevention" approach with the young people using active listening and involvement are among the cross-cutting themes promoted (DYCA, 2014:23). Additional goals of "quality services" along with "strengthening transitions" and "collaboration and coordination" were key methods utilised in the whole programme of events (DYCA, 2014:23).

The proposal group agreed to initiate a Region wide project to raise awareness of alcohol harms among the general population with specific inputs in socially disadvantaged areas and groups bringing together the resources of the volunteers and community workers in community groups, resource centres, youth, sporting clubs and educational institutions to enhance visibility and aid understanding and prevention in the longer term. Reports from the Task Force community representatives and services in this area have clearly identified more visible and increased harmful alcohol drinking levels with worryingly high levels among certain more vulnerable categories identified in the NDS/NSMS actions. A key focus of this project is to highlight and affect alcohol consumption across the Task Force communities to improve health and well being supporting the Healthy Ireland – National Health and Wellbeing Framework 2013-2025 (DoH, 2013).

Project Main Aim

The main objective was to initiate a community mobilisation action opportunity to raise awareness of the levels of harmful alcohol consumption and resultant behaviours and to highlight the visibility of this to the young people of the community on a regular basis. The project is to be run over a number of stages to clearly address the National Drugs Strategy actions 28 (DoCRGA, 2009) along with the National Substance Misuse Strategy actions 1 and 2 (DoH, 2012) which deliver clear achievable goals under the Health Ireland framework (DoH, 2013). The Project was then broken

down into a number of clear stages and actions to build on the overall aim and deliver inputs to all identified groups across the community.

Project Action 1

Initially, the project had to tender for and appoint a specific Project Coordinator to lead out on the key actions and activities required to deliver the project in full. The ideal candidate had to show previous experience and suitable qualifications working in disadvantaged community settings along with a presentation of a plan in which all aspects of the proposal would be delivered. A small interview group was established which arranged a job specification, application process with presentation and interview format agreed. The job specification was then published. Further to the successful completion of all stages, Stephanie Power was appointed as Project Coordinator.

A steering group was then sought and convened [see Appendix I]. This group met monthly with the Project Coordinator to help address issues that arose and to provide assistance especially with areas where no existing services were in place. The Task Force Coordinator also provided additional assistance and direction to the Project Coordinator on a weekly basis to keep all facets of this multi-pronged approach on track. Attendance at all meetings was high and there existed a great willingness among all members to engage and work out ways of dealing with any problems which arose. Much was achieved and many innovative solutions found with this approach.

A social media page was opened and messages were uploaded on a regular basis. Ongoing training and education news was circulated and this added to the collective profile and interest in the campaign across all communities involved. A full report from the Coordinator was provided [see Appendix II].

Project Action 2

The first stage was to contact the Task Force funded drug prevention workers, community representatives and members to assist to identify community volunteers working with youth groups in the key target areas. Also, alcohol training course and modules were assessed until the most appropriate one was identified. Training of these identified adult volunteers was organised. Two separate training arrangements were carried through to facilitate the majority of persons identified and contacted. One was with a group of 14 adults where all the training was carried out in one day. The second was with a group of 15 where two half day training sessions were carried out one week apart. This ensured that 29 persons received the training which was in excess of the 20 persons originally proposed. The final number comprised 3 Task Force funded staff workers and 26 community volunteers directly working with young persons in the identified communities. The training delivered also provided these individuals with a great networking opportunity which should facilitate ongoing peer support and possible future education and training.

The course identified and used was provided by an Úrrus trainer with Ballymun Youth Action Project. The content was adult specific and utilised adult training and active participation techniques. The core contents included: alcohol the drug and how it works, the effects of alcohol on the body and brain, acute and chronic harm caused by alcohol, alcohol effects on the individual, family and

community, and interventions and services. Discussion, questioning and clarifications were encouraged throughout. Certificates were issued to all who attended this training.

Project Action 3

The next stage of the proposal was to work with youth in each of the five identified communities within the East Coast Region. These areas were finally confirmed as Wicklow town, Rathnew, Newtownmountkennedy, Roundwood and Carnew. Arklow was originally proposed as an area but, having regard to the level of current youth work infrastructure and activity here compared with the severe lack of any basic youth work service in Carnew, this substitution was agreed by all parties. A drug specific course was identified for delivery to one or more small groups in each of the areas, which could be adapted taking account of the age groups involved and the amount of volunteers trained in each area. In three areas, short courses were delivered to youth group over a number of weeks which incorporated high levels of interaction and active learning techniques. In the other two areas, a slightly more condensed version of the course was delivered to young people over a few consecutive days. However, the same messages and information was used in both.

The programme delivered was taken from the CHAIRDE programme, which is an evidence-based and evidence-informed drug and alcohol awareness programme targeted specifically at youth and designed to be delivered in a youth group setting. The programme seeks to engage with young people through a personal development model of youth work that aims to promote healthier choices, increase knowledge of drugs and alcohol and the associated risks, build confidence and positive relationships with peers and to enhance the ability to be assertive and make better informed choices. The key areas covered in each course were: what is alcohol, myths and facts about alcohol, how alcohol affects physical and mental health, attitudes to alcohol, drinking scenarios and self esteem and peer pressure. Each group was worked with separately and the content changed according to the ages involved and the existing prior knowledge.

Carnew, in the far south of the county, currently has little by way of youth services or clear structure in the area on which to commence negotiations to deliver on this project. However, due to a large number of contacts being made and the availability of volunteers, it was possible to progress with this area in a reasonably straightforward way. Thus, a group of 20 young people aged 11 to 13 years were identified and, after initial pre-development work was completed, the alcohol awareness course was introduced and delivered over a number of additional weeks and specific sessions. Active participation was encouraged throughout with many of the course messages delivered in such a way as to encourage confidence building and social interactions suitable to such ages.

Rathnew has some services that have developed to address areas of high social deprivation within this community. Project work in this area was greatly assisted by the local Croi Rath Naoi Community Development worker along with the adult trained volunteers who were available to assist both the identification and delivery of the alcohol awareness with young people sessions. Two separate groups were identified with eight in one for those aged 10 to 11 years and twelve young persons in the other aged 12 to 13 years. Here, the alcohol awareness course was introduced and

delivered over a number of weeks and specific sessions. Active participation was encouraged throughout with many of the course messages delivered in such a way as to encourage confidence building and social interactions suitable to such ages.

Wicklow town is an area where there has been much predevelopment work commenced in areas of high deprivation and need. Although some youth workers are assigned to this area, many alcohol specific issues have been raised with the Task Force in regard to young people at younger ages than those normally targeted by youth services, being regularly exposed to dangerous alcohol consumption by peers and adults across this community. Young people from these at risk communities were specifically targeted for this project and two groups were identified; one group of 15 young people from 12 to 14 years and a second group of eight young people from 15 to 18 years of age.

Roundwood is a town in the middle of the county which, although it has sports clubs, has no general youth clubs or groups which has been a problem with regard to pre-existing structures under which this initiative could be launched. A few volunteers in the area were seeking support to initiate a youth group and, thus, these volunteers were contacted to be trained and to further identify young people for the alcohol awareness course. Facilities were also an issue although a town centre hall was eventually accessed for this group. Approximately 30 young people were identified for the initiative here and were aged from 10 to 14 years old.

Newtownmountkennedy is a town in the north of the county that has been especially targeted with interventions by the Task Force in recent years. Further to the partnership work of the Task Force in this regard, a more sustained and regular youth service has recently been established here. In order to compliment and advance this, the alcohol awareness project was keen to engage with this community. A high level of interest and support was generated with volunteers and adults in this area resulting in 55 young people ranging in ages from 7 to 15 years attending the alcohol awareness events and also 5 adult volunteers attending and receiving additional information sessions. Additional youth workers were brought in here and Roundwood to assist with the numbers involved.

Project Action 4

Further to adult volunteers training and the alcohol awareness course with each of the five communities, all young people were encouraged to enter a poster competition with an alcohol prevention message to put the learning into practice and reaffirm this project work. These entries were collected and judged. An independent judging panel of a local Counsellor, a Task Force Drugs Prevention Worker and a local artist was assembled and a number of winning entries were identified. In total, 77 young people chose to enter the poster competition and have their entries judged. A prize to the best entry in each of the communities was identified and a number of runner-up prizes for very promising work were also chosen. One overall winner was also chosen. This poster became the image for the campaign.

This overall winning image was taken and provided to a number of outdoor poster advertisers to display at visible spots across the communities chosen. Much negotiation was carried out to get the

best value for money and maximise the visibility of the campaign in each of the areas selected. This occurred in the latter part of the campaign but warranted much press. In addition, the competition prize giving and messages were covered in local papers which are freely delivered to all homes particularly in the five main communities chosen for this initiative.



Outdoor Advertising of Poster in Rathnew



Outdoor Advertising of Poster in Wicklow town

Project Action 5

Parents were identified and invited to attend an Alcohol Information evening and prize giving ceremony as a final piece in the Alcohol Awareness course their child had attended. Additionally, all volunteer workers, course participants, Task Force members and partner organisations were invited.

A number of speakers address the large group including John Lonergan, the former prison governor, giving a clear message regarding alcohol in the home and community. A young group of rappers and musicians from Finglas attended and gave various renditions of material with a range of messages about the harms of alcohol which was extremely well received by the young people in the audience. This was to reinforce the messages already disseminated in the training and awareness courses but aimed specifically at the parents and community leaders. Prizes for the poster competitions were then awarded. This event was covered with photographs and information piece by the local free press which is delivered into all houses in the County.

Expenditure

<i>Service</i>	<i>Core Duties/Responsibilities</i>	<i>Costs</i>
Project Coordinator	Advertising for position. Key driver of campaign in 5 areas to deliver on all objectives in proposal.	€24,954.00
Adult Training Events (2)	Two separate training events for 29 adult workers and volunteers working specifically with youth groups in the five selected areas across the county	€1,956.65
Youth Alcohol Awareness Events (5 Communities)	Alcohol Awareness courses with 8 separate groups comprising 148 young people in the five identified communities across the county. Costs include venue rental, additional youth work support, equipment and resources required.	€3,594.86
Poster Competition to reinforce the Alcohol Messages given	Collection and judging of all entrants. Agreed prize giving to all winners. Cloth bag to all entrants with Alcohol Awareness booklet and messages included.	€3,436.27
Advertising of winning Alcohol Awareness message in the communities	Poster display in outdoor advertising across the county with specific promotions in each of the five communities chosen for the campaign. Newspaper coverage in local press which is freely delivered to each household.	€5,050.38
Parents information event with Alcohol reinforcement messages for the home	As a culmination of the work, parents were specifically invited to attend a drugs awareness event with speakers invited to engage with parents regarding alcohol in the home specifically. The young people were also in attendance for the prize giving piece of the evening.	€799.00
	Total	€39,791.16

Table 2: Campaign outputs and linked expenditure

Conclusions and Discussion

The remit of the County Wicklow Alcohol Awareness Campaign 2016 was to initiate a community mobilisation action opportunity to raise awareness of alcohol harms by selecting 5 local communities and delivering a multi-targeted approach in each area. The key objectives of this initiative were successfully and effectively delivered. They include:

- (1) Open the conversations about alcohol consumption in the community
- (2) Identify and discuss the negative resultant behaviours associated with alcohol misuse
- (3) Educate the adult leaders and parents on the many visibility signs of alcohol in the community
- (4) Identify how everyone has a role to protect young people from unnecessary exposure to alcohol

Opening the conversation about alcohol consumption in the community resulted in the training of 29 adult members of communities involved. These people work with youth groups across the area and their attitudes and behaviours will be directly viewed by the young people they work with. Thus, their engagement and commitment to the process was necessary to commence the project. It will also necessary if questions or issues arise after the youth education events that their leaders have some answers or are given the skills necessary to source appropriate answers for young people. The group engagement and adult learning techniques employed gave ample opportunities for conversations and discussions to take place to further equip everyone with the knowledge and understanding of the issues involved. The display of posters across the communities and discussions and images in the local press brought the message to an even wider audience.

Identifying and discussing the resultant behaviours associated with alcohol misuse was achieved by clearly showing young people how alcohol can affect the body and brain in particular and, using beer goggles can affect your ability to coordinate and behave in the way you may wish. The link between alcohol misuse and the possibilities of incidents and accidents was discussed, in an age appropriate manner, with all adults and young people. Issues covered included drink-related antisocial behaviour (with linkages to public order offences) and excessive drinking generally. Young people drinking while underage and other risks were discussed and considered by all groups.

Educating the adult leaders and parents of young people in the community was achieved in a number of ways. The course attended by the volunteer youth leaders was sent to the parents for their permission for their child to attend an Alcohol Awareness course appropriate to their age. During the course, the young person was asked to ascertain certain information from their parents which would have caused some discussion on the course content as it proceeded. Social media messages were generated and circulated throughout so that messages and activity based learning was advertised to generate support for the next groups to engage. Also, at the end of the course, all parents were invited to an Alcohol Information evening with specific messages regarding alcohol use in the home and the visibility of this to the young person living there.

Identifying how everyone has a role to protect young people from unnecessary exposure to alcohol was achieved by exploring options for young people. Supporting youth groups and activities which do not include alcohol were identified and discussed. Much of the inputs were selected as they showed young people having fun with their peers in activities like percussion and drumming skills, non-alcohol cocktail making, team working and socialisation in non-alcohol environments. Drinking in public and ways to tackle were discussed. The support of other organisations was presented including the local Residents Associations, Gardaí and Councils to assist with this issue. Again, a collective approach was reinforced to show how everyone has a role and that working together can achieve greater results.

Recommendations

The short timeframe for this initiative resulted in every focus on achieving all aspects of what was a very ambitious programme of events. Advertising and recruitment of a project coordinator could not be started until the decision regarding the project was delivered in December 2015. Thus, with advertising and interviewing, the roll out was unable to commence until March which resulted in the campaign being reduced to 10 months at most. An earlier start on the recruitment process would have greatly assisted here. However, this was expressly ruled out in the tender documents.

All adult volunteer workers had to be identified in each of the five communities. This proved a lot of work and meant the campaign seemed to have a very slow start. Some initial contacts were received positively but through a variety of reasons all did not come to fruition. Initially, a lot of energy was expended in making these contacts and trying to set up a database of potential volunteers to engage with. It became frustrating when contacts changed and some doors, which had opened initially, then closed. The Task Force existing workers and their contact networks should have been more readily able to identify and engage volunteers in this initiative. Some of the areas chosen were almost 'green field sites' as they displayed a distinct lack of existing structures and any cohesive community development platform to work from. Thus, no real engagement had been made until this project initiated it. In future, the Task Force funded workers need to have a greater engagement and database of existing contacts and services in all communities, if they are to meet their remit in full. In hindsight, it was probably too challenging to ask this one temporary project coordinator to deliver contacts and initial pre-development work in the areas selected.

Identifying the volunteers and working with all to develop one specific training event proved too much. The rural nature of the communities and the lack of travel infrastructure was a problem in a number of cases. Transport had to be provided in a number of cases and car sharing in others to help minimise the costs but afford everyone the opportunity to attend and participate. As volunteers were sought, their time was often taken up with youth activities so much credit was given to these people to attend and engage with these additional training event(s). Basic refreshments were provided for these groups where training was over full days or a number of days. Due to work commitments, some volunteers were still unable to attend either event. However, those who attended gave very high praise indeed for the organisation, course materials, and delivery of the programme. Many showed interest in further such training events to assist them in their volunteer activities. The Task Force hopes to further this work in 2017 with an Alcohol Strategy development group which will address specific alcohol training and education across the region.

The Alcohol Awareness programme delivered to the young people was activity led and thus, many took on board the messages more readily due to the active learning techniques employed. Given time, a follow up refresher session could be in order and help reinforce and evaluate what messages had been retained. More involvement and engagement of parents in the young person's course could be of greater benefit in the long run and could be utilised in future events.

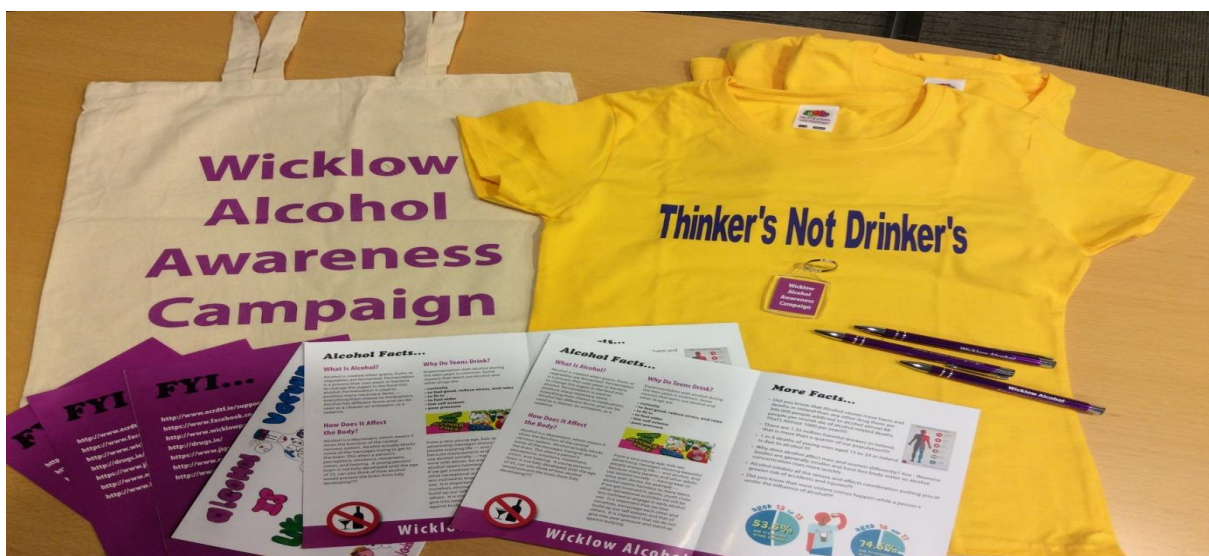
Asking the adult volunteers to engage in a Campaign Slogan competition may have further linked this group to the rest of the campaign. Also asking them to link to the social media page or collecting and collating emails for messaging them at various parts of the campaign would help keep

them engaged and develop their skills and knowledge with additional information and material in a systematic way should be considered.

Alcohol as a substance has been normalised in many communities and homes over a number of years, in part due to its presence so deeply embedded in Irish socialising culture. Some reluctance, particularly among adults, was noticed at the earliest time. It is quite possible that a programme also naming 'other drugs' may have been more acceptable. As alcohol is present in most homes, some adults had a reluctance to address this or even consider any problem this may present. Particularly for the communities selected which are in rural areas, alcohol (both on and off trade) outlets can often outnumber other businesses within the townland and alcohol taking in the home may be a long established tradition.

Most of the adult volunteers who attended the training were female. Although a number of males and fathers attended the information evening, female adults outnumbered the males by a large majority across all events. Male role models and volunteer workers can be in the minority in most youth services, where sport is not a primary feature. It is important that young people see positive male role models as well as female in all aspects of their lives and particularly in their youth services roles. Inputs from both genders were encouraged throughout the whole project which encouraged a fuller participation of all. However, in running this again, a more focused approach to encouraging the participation of male adults would need further thought and approaches.

Through existing contacts, costs were kept to a minimum. However in some rural areas, space was difficult to source to provide the programme initiatives. Some community and parish centres either disallowed or stated that the delivery of youth activities did not meet the criteria for the use of the facility making it extremely difficult to establish and develop such groups and youth based work. A perception was given that youth services were uncontrolled activity and could damage facilities, a sentiment for which no clear basis could be found. Although often more available, premises linked to or coexisting with public houses were deemed to be wholly unsuitable for this work. Community facilities which actively 'discourage' any sector of the community need to be challenged and asked to provide and carry the cost of alternative premises.



Poster Participants Prizes

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Appendix I – Steering Group Members

The Alcohol Awareness Project Steering Group comprised the following:

John Snell, Cllr	Chairperson
Aisling Byrne	County Wicklow Partnership Limited
John Craven	HSE Outreach Manager, Addiction Services
Fiona Creedon	Crosscare Youth Services
Mary Millett	County Wicklow Partnership Limited
Stephanie Power	DAF Project Coordinator
Maeve Shanley	Task Force Coordinator
Ruth Graham	Task Force Administrator



Appendix II - Project Coordinator's Report

Report of the work of the Project Coordinator on the interactions, inputs and general organisation involved in putting together the County Wicklow Alcohol Awareness Campaign in accordance with the proposal agreed.

Interagency Contact

In order for the project to take effect, initial meetings were organised with all relevant agencies already working in the sector within each given area to propose interagency collaboration and enhance the effectiveness of the work to be carried out. The existing infrastructure in each area was reviewed and meetings with potential projects/clubs who would avail and benefit from the service delivery were requested.

Area 1 – Wicklow Town

In **Wicklow**, an initial meeting with the Prevention and Education Outreach (PEO) Worker for the East Coast Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force was arranged. The PEO worker role has a wide remit and works in different areas around the county. The meeting was to firstly give an overview of the work of this project and to determine where linkages could be made and to ensure there was not going to be a duplication of services so as to increase the potential for widespread delivery and value for money. Contact details in the areas to be engaged with were exchanged as well as gaps in capacity identified. The PEO worker was also informed of and enrolled for the adult volunteer and workers training pieces.

The East Coast Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force funded staff of the Irish Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) Childhood Support Service based in Wicklow Town were then contacted. At a meeting with three of the relevant staff members, the project was fully outlined and linkages and the potential for enhancement of each other's work were explored. Two of the staff members enrolled for the training that was due to be provided.

The BBH Group in Wicklow Town was then contacted. The BBH Group are the management committee of Hillview Community Centre who work directly with youth groups from disadvantaged areas in Wicklow Town (BBH is named after the Ballyguile, Broadlough and Hillview housing estates in this area). The Community Centre is based in an area with high poverty indicators and the young people are deemed at risk of substance abuse and anti social behaviour issues, among others. From this meeting, two groups of young people were identified for programme delivery and three of the volunteers put themselves forward for the training.

Attempts were then made to engage with sporting organisations within the town. Contact was made with the man who runs The Wicklow Boxing Club with an initial phone call. There was ongoing corresponding by email where the delivery of an Alcohol Awareness Programme to the youth who were engaged in the club was proposed and further training to the volunteers running the club was offered. He, in turn, proposed the offer to the youth groups/parents and volunteers but nothing progressed further due to a current focus on other issues and time constraints on the part of the volunteers.

Contact was then made with the Chairperson of the Wicklow GAA juvenile groups, again proposing to carry out work highlighting the issue of alcohol use in sporting organisations in Ireland and how delivery of an alcohol awareness programme would benefit the young people and how the training would enhance the ability of the volunteers working with the juvenile members to identify and deal with issues of challenging or worrying behaviour. The Chairperson, after discussing the proposal with the rest of the committee, returned the decision that they would not be engaging as they had their own substance abuse officer.

Contact was made with volunteers from the Stage Youth Café in Wicklow to offer them a place on the training. Although they were interested, they were not able to attend due to other work commitments.

Three separate meetings with the Wicklow Youth Mental Health Committee were attended where the project and coordinator role was outlined with specific mention of the benefit to them during their week of programme delivery in schools around Wicklow pertaining to youth mental health issues. Providing a workshop in the schools during that week was proposed that would highlight how alcohol impacts on a persons' mental health. After some discussion, a decision was made that they wanted to proceed with different topics and did not want to include this programme.

Area 2 - Rathnew

In **Rathnew**, contact was made with the Development Worker for Co Wicklow Partnership based in Rathnew Community Centre (Croi Rath Naoi). This Development Worker works with youth groups through the means of after schools programmes and youth cafés. She was very enthusiastic and interested in availing of the programme and identified two groups of young people whom she felt would benefit from an alcohol awareness programme. She was also interested in availing of the training in addition to one of her volunteers.

Here also, the Chairperson of Rathnew GAA was contacted and initially was very interested in engaging with the proposal. A further meeting with the rest of the committee indicated that they were all on board and expressed how they felt it was an important issue. Unfortunately nothing progressed after this with the club due to a death within the membership and other competing commitments. Contact was ongoing with the club's Chairperson informing him of other training dates and events should any of the club members or young people wish to attend.

As many of the young people who attend the Rathnew Boxing Club, also attend the Community Worker's groups, two of the volunteers put their names down for the training here also.

Area 3 - Carnew

In **Carnew**, contact was made with a youth leader from Chillax Youth Café in Carnew. Chillax Youth Café is a Foróige club run by volunteers that engages with 60 young people on a weekly basis. After then travelling to Carnew, a meeting was held with the other youth leaders to discuss the proposed work. From that meeting a large group of young people were identified who the leaders felt would benefit from the alcohol awareness programme and all volunteers expressed an interest in the training on the conditions it did not clash with their own work commitments. Thus both adult volunteers and groups were readily identified.

Area 4 - Roundwood

The engagement with the town of **Roundwood** presented a number of difficulties as there was little or no infrastructure or existing youth service provision. Much searching and work was involved to get any local contacts at all. Finally, contact was made with the Chairperson of the Roundwood Community Council by telephone followed up by a later meeting. This meeting helped explain and get a deeper insight into the profile of the village. It was also apparent that there were several volunteers on the Roundwood Community Council that were interested in setting something up for the youth of the village as there was nothing in place for them. It was noted that there had been past attempts to do so in which a youth café had been set up every Wednesday night in the local Parish Hall with attendance from over thirty young people. The volunteers then began to encounter difficulties with the management from the Parish Hall and the youth café had to close. They sought other premises with no success. This helped identify that there was a need for other services to work in the area and assist the community council in setting up something permanent for the youth. Contact information for the other committee members was exchanged. Email contact was then made with them offering the volunteer training programme and offering to meet with them to discuss a strategy moving forward.

Contact was made with the Parish Hall committee and they agreed to provide a room for one night per week for 8 weeks to deliver an alcohol awareness programme for the youth. It was hoped that the other volunteers would engage in this process with me so that they could contact the youth groups and shadow me for those weeks while I would work towards trying to access something more sustainable for them. Communication continued with the Chairperson but the other committee members did not progress their involvement. After several attempts to encourage engagement from these other committee members, a decision was made to try and engage with the youth directly. A notice was placed in the The Roundwood Community News by the Chairperson advertising the proposed programme and seeking new volunteers who were interested in setting something up for the youth of the village. Three young people responded and made direct contact who were interested in doing the programme but, as that was the only response we got, it was not possible to proceed. Outreach work was carried out on the streets of Roundwood twice targeting the Main Street and all areas where young people hang out but the result was poor.

The next strategy was to try and engage with young people who were already engaged in other activities. Contact was made with Roundwood GAA and a meeting with the Chairperson was held but, again, nothing progressed from this. The task of increasing the project visibility in Roundwood to address the issues in the village was very difficult. This area was selected due to specific drugs and alcohol incidents and concerns raised associated with a lack of general youth service provision. However, highlighting such issues was not going to be easily delivered.

The final attempt was to contact the school. As Roundwood has no secondary school, contact was made with the 6th class teacher from St Laurences' National School. At a meeting with this teacher, it was stressed how it would be of great benefit for her students to get involved in the programme. She agreed to meeting with her class of 30 students and having an informal yet informative discussion on alcohol. Two sessions were held with the class and they all agreed to participate in the

project poster competition. Many also attended the alcohol awareness events which was held later in the village and participated in the many activity based workshops provided.

Area 5 - Newtownmountkennedy

The first point of contact in **Newtown** was the two youth workers delivering services in this area who work for Crosscare (with the team in Bray Youth Service). These youth workers had just recently had their remits changed to provide greater involvement in the area of Newtown so it was important that collaboration with them was progressed. At an initial meeting, they were offered training for their role and they were requested to identify any young people groups they worked with that they felt would benefit from the alcohol awareness programme. They were very positive at our initial meeting but they then became less interested in engaging with the project staff or the programme. After several attempts via email and phone to contact them, there was little or no response. As there was an initial agreement on a collaborative approach, this created obstacles for the project in relation to time and deadlines.

Looking at other agencies in the area, contact was made with the Chairperson of the Newtown GAA's juvenile clubs who was very interested and later arranged a meeting with the rest of the committee. At a meeting with a group of fourteen men from this club, all agreed that their youth groups would greatly benefit from the programme. The men were offered the opportunity to avail of the training but there was an unwillingness to engage with it. Despite pressing them to engage in the training so as to assist with sustainability, none of this male committee would and sought to identify some women to attend in their stead. This resulted in a later introduction to the GAA juvenile girls club who the men felt would benefit from participating in the programme. A request to see if the male juvenile club group would be interested was dismissed politely.

A meeting was held with the GAA clubs Juvenile girls' team and twelve of them said they would like to do it. A room in the GAA club every Wednesday was also offered in order to deliver the programme. This later became an issue after contact was made by one of the Crosscare youth workers to say that this clashed with her girls youth group. That issue was resolved when the juvenile Chairperson arranged a different time for the delivery of the programme with the identified girls. A female volunteer at the club was present for the first night of programme delivery at the changed times but only two girls attended. The following week, nobody came. Contact was made with the group who then said they had other commitments so a change of direction and another strategy to target the Newtown area was needed.

After contact was made with the school and the Home School Community Liaison Officer, it was clear that they did not wish to engage with the programme. Another meeting with the two youth workers in this area was requested. Again they were accommodating and said their junior leader group would be interested in doing the training and delivering the programme to juniors. When the training date was selected they failed to respond to communication and progress this.

The last attempt at promoting the programme in Newtown was to have an open Alcohol Awareness Event for the community to attend.

TRAINING – Adult Volunteers, Parents and Workers

Alcohol specific training was sought with several different training providers. A meeting was held with Noel O'Connor from ÚRRUS, a part of the Ballymun Youth Action Project. A meeting was held with Noel in Ballymun. After a lengthy discussion about the training needs specific for the programme, Noel agreed to tailor a piece of training for this specific programme. The first leg of the training was delivered in The Grand Hotel in Wicklow on July 7th with attendance from fourteen people from different organisations around Wicklow, such as, Roundwood Community Council, BBH Group, Rathnew Boxing Club, East Wicklow Youth Services, Foróige, East Coast Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force, Ballyoden residential and the ISPC. The first leg of training was a full day and was certified. The content of the training was –

- Alcohol the drug and how it Works
- Effects of Alcohol on the body and brain
- Acute and chronic harm caused by alcohol
- Alcohol the individual/family/community
- Interventions & Services
- Questions & Answers

Feedback from the training was very positive. Evidence provided on evaluations

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The objectives of the training were clearly defined and the content of the course covered the agreed syllabus	8	4			
Participation and Interaction were encouraged	10	2			
The materials distributed handouts/slides were easy to follow	10	2			
The content was organised and easy to follow	9	3			
Topics covered were easy to follow	5	5	2		
The training experience will be useful in my work	6	5	1		
The trainer was knowledgeable about the topics covered	12				
The trainer was well prepared and communicated the subject matter satisfactorily	10	2			
The time allotted for the training was sufficient	9	1	1	1	
The meeting venue and facilities were adequate and comfortable	4	4	3		1

Two people left slightly early and did not complete the evaluation

The second leg of the training, again delivered by Noel O'Connor, took place in the CEART building in Wicklow Town. CEART is a Traveller specific community organisation with staff and volunteers who work specifically with Travellers around the county. Fifteen of those practitioners participated in the programme. The feedback and evaluation was very positive. The training was specifically tailored to meet the needs of the participants and it was delivered over two half days at the end of October. Direct referrals and support were arranged for some of the women who spoke out about how alcohol was impacting on their lives.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Participation and Interaction were encouraged	13				
The materials distributed handouts/slides were easy to follow	13				
The content was organised and easy to follow	13				
Topics covered were easy to follow	13				
The training experience will be useful in my work	13				
The trainer was knowledgeable about the topics covered	13				
The trainer was well prepared and communicated the subject matter satisfactorily	13				
The time allotted for the training was sufficient	13				
The meeting venue and facilities were adequate and comfortable	13				
I gained new knowledge about the topic	13				
I would recommend the training	13				

2 chose not to participate in the Evaluation

Delivery of Alcohol Awareness Programme to Youth Groups

The Alcohol Awareness programme used with all youth groups was derived from The CHAIRDE Programme, which is an evidence-based and evidence informed drug and alcohol awareness programme. In a previous role, this Coordinator devised, adapted and delivered this to several youth groups over the years. The aims and objectives of the programme are to engage with young people through a personal development model of youth work that aims to promote healthier choices, increase knowledge of drugs and alcohol and the associated risks, confidence building, positive relationship development with peers and to enhance the ability to be assertive and to have the ability to make better informed decisions. For this project, the programme was tailored so it had a specific focus on alcohol. The content of the six week programme was –

- What is Alcohol?

- Myths and Facts about Alcohol/ Moving Debate
- Alcohol the effects on physical health/mental health
- Attitudes to Alcohol
- Why do young people drink/scenarios
- Self Esteem/Peer pressure
- Beer Goggles Activity/Interactive Evaluation

Carnew – Group Profile

A large group of fifteen to twenty young people, both male and female, aged 11–13 years took part. The group are very much a pre development group with issues around peer pressure, confidence and body image.

Outcomes Recorded

1. Young people engaged voluntarily on a weekly basis
2. The young people built on their capacity to build relationships with youth workers
3. The young people were able to express themselves and ask open questions about issues that concerned them
4. Team Building activities improved team work ability and peer relationships
5. The young people noted how the programme had improved their confidence
6. The youth workers identified strengths in the young people which were further encouraged
7. Attitudes towards the norms of alcohol were challenged
8. Young people learned a lot about the harms of alcohol and spoke openly about mental health

Rathnew – Profile of 2 groups

The programme was delivered to two groups of young people in Rathnew one small group of eight and a larger group of 12 young people. Again these were a pre developmental group with issues around peer pressure, confidence and a few of the young people presented with issues affecting them in their home and community.

Outcomes Recorded

1. Young people engaged voluntarily on a weekly basis
2. The young people built on their capacity to build relationships with youth workers
3. The young people were able to express themselves and ask open questions about issues that concerned them
4. Team Building activities improved team work ability and peer relationships
5. The young people noted how the programme had improved their confidence
6. The youth workers identified strengths in the young people which were further encouraged

7. Attitudes towards the norms of alcohol were challenged
8. Young people learned a lot about the harms of alcohol
9. The young people presented with questions and statements which instigated that further targeted work needs to be done in the area and with specific young people
10. Ongoing work is now being delivered by Anita Healy, Croi Rath Naoi Community Worker

Wicklow – Profile of 2 groups

Two groups in Wicklow town were identified, a junior and a senior group, all secondary school ages. The programme was tailored to meet the needs of the different age cohorts - both groups that are very much in need of continued engagement in youth work and from the most disadvantaged area in the town. The junior group were a group of 15 young people from 12 – 14 years of age and the senior group were a core group of eight 15 – 18 year olds. The senior group were already engaged in early alcohol use and it was reported that some were using illegal substances also. The programme delivered to them was more practical and it was run on a Friday night from 8.30pm until 10pm. This was chosen intentionally as 10pm is the time the local off licence closes and Friday night is normally the night they may drink. The work carried out with this group was more focused on harm reduction so first aid including the recovery position, the laws around alcohol, sexual health and alcohol were covered. A sexual health kit was used and they attempted to put a condom on a fake penis with beer goggles on. The needs identified for sustainability with both groups have been addressed locally.

Outcomes Recorded

1. Young people engaged voluntarily on a weekly basis
2. The young people built on their capacity to build relationships with youth workers
3. The young people were able to express themselves and ask open questions about issues that concerned them
4. Team Building activities improved team work ability and peer relationships
5. The young people noted how the programme had improved their confidence
6. The youth workers identified strengths in the young people which were further encouraged
7. Attitudes towards the norms of alcohol were challenged
8. Young people learned a lot about the harms of alcohol
9. Young people from other areas and from the Traveller community engaged for the first time
10. Antisocial behaviour on the weekends decreased in the area
11. Young people are now more involved and included in their community
12. A continuum of engagement has been set up for both groups
13. A referral was made for one of the youth who was no longer in formal education and is now attending youthreach.

Roundwood and Newtown – profile of 2 groups

On the 1st of November a full day Alcohol Awareness Event in Roundwood was organised and in Newtown the following day. Holding these events in this way were seen as the better plan as there

were many difficulties encountered trying to set something up in both areas due to the lack of infrastructure and a resistance by some services to directly engage. There were different workshops presented on the day with some used as a tool of engagement. An alcohol free cocktail stand was set up with two presenters showing how and allowing the young people and parents to make cheap, tasty and alcohol free cocktails. A drumming workshop was fully equipped with a large range of percussion instruments which not only provided a tool for engagement but it was entertaining and taught the young people some team work skills. The specific alcohol awareness workshops were delivered by a number of experienced youth workers who used beer goggle games and an interactive quiz. A workshop for parents was provided which explored what parents can do to discourage their children from engaging in alcohol use. Stilt-walkers, who circulating around the areas, were young people from the Rialto Youth Project. They entertained the guests on each day and did some outreach promoting the programme by wearing our 'Wicklow Alcohol Awareness T-shirts' on the streets of both areas. There was good attendance on both days from both young people and parents and the events were published in 'The Wicklow Times', a local freely distributed newspaper. Feedback from the public was good and it was an innovative way to engage with people on an issue that affects so many in Irish society. It was the last attempt to engage with both these areas as the project had encountered previous difficulties and obstacles with these areas but great success was achieved in the approach adopted.

Social Media Set up and Maintain

A social media page was set up to record the progress of the project with all the groups involved. The page called "Wicklow Alcohol Awareness Campaign" has posts about the work carried out with all groups, articles and topical current affairs about alcohol and its harms, links to other pages and support systems, details about our events and campaigns. All pictures and information of this project can be found here –

<https://www.facebook.com/ecrdtfalcoholawareness/>

Poster Competition

An integral part of this project was the poster competition, where all young people who participated in the alcohol awareness programme, including the students of St Laurence's National School Roundwood who availed of an alcohol awareness talk and participated in workshops at our event, took part. The aim of the poster competition was to get the young people thinking and reflecting on what they learned and what kind of message they would like to send to protect people from the harms of alcohol. There was also a buy-in for participating in the competition which was having your picture displayed and disseminated across the county, but there were prizes for the winner of each area, the overall winner and some special mention prizes. The winning pictures were selected by three impartial judges each with a different role: one for the artistic side, one for the message projected and the other to ensure impartiality. The overall winner was a 12 year old girl from Roundwood whose picture spoke a thousand words. All submitted pictures were displayed in Wicklow County Council buildings for two weeks, before the prize giving event.

Parents Awareness Night/Prize Giving Ceremony

On the 24th of November the prize giving ceremony for the poster competition was held along with the parents' awareness night. All young people and their parents who participated in the programme were invited to come along on the night. Invitations were sent out to all organisations to give to the young people. There was tea/coffee and finger food and John Lonergan (former Governor of Mountjoy Prison) was organised as the guest speaker. The night began with all the acknowledgements, 'Thank you's' and introductions, followed by a talk from John Lonergan directed at parents about young people and alcohol. The talk was very informative and eye opening and the parents learned small things that they can do at home to prevent the normalisation of alcohol use in their homes. Entertainment was provided from a group of young musical 'rappers' from Finglas, who rapped about the harms of alcohol and drug misuse. They really added to the night and were thoroughly enjoyed by all. The night ended with the young people being presented with their prizes and all young people who participated were presented with certificates and cloth bags with further alcohol information included. The night was attended by over 150 people and photographs were taken and published in "The Wicklow Times" which is a local newspaper distributed to all homes within the county.

Final Conclusion

The project started off slowly as the lack of infrastructure and resistance from other agencies posed difficulties for the coordination of all aspects of this project. I explored every avenue possible in order to ensure that the work was carried out. In every area I worked, at least two people questioned me why I wasn't doing anything about 'drugs' also. I got the feeling that there would have been a bigger buy in for people if the issue wasn't about something so deeply embedded into Irish culture. Alcohol is in every home and, although it is creating huge problems for individuals, families and communities, people do not want to address the issue especially in rural areas. In each rural area I worked, there were more pubs than shops and there's a hidden problem which I observed to be a male dominant problem. The prize giving ceremony was primarily attended by women and the training was primarily attended by women. I think moving forward and doing an alcohol awareness project again, a strategy needs to be put together of how to engage men within it. Although women are big consumers of alcohol in this country, it seems women are more comfortable addressing the issue and men still seem to carry fear or shame. It has become a societal norm to be a harmful drinker. To challenge this issue effectively there needs to be a gender balance. Although we encountered some difficulties and resistance, we also had some very supportive and willing practitioners and volunteers who were eager to see their youth engaged in something so significant. There were many positive outcomes and a few doors have been opened for small organisations and committees who needed the recognition and extra support. There has been great learning in it from all of the volunteers with whom I have worked with and who did the training. This is so important for progression and sustainability which we have achieved in the areas that collaborated with us.

Stephanie Power
Project Coordinator