

**Community survey: drug and alcohol issues
and support in the Isles of Scilly**

December 2016

Overview

A community survey was undertaken by Healthwatch Isles of Scilly to support the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Drug and Alcohol Action Team evaluation of services and need in the islands.

The survey ran from 11th November to 2nd December 2016 and was available online and by post.

It was advertised through a postal and e-bulletin, posters, on Facebook, and was available at points around the islands.

Facebook reach for the survey post was 435. 35 people engaged with the post and 8 reacted, commented or shared.

30 survey responses were received: 27 online; and 3 by post.

We pass on our findings, therefore, with the caveat that they are not statistically representative of the views and experience of the island population.

The survey yielded a high number of skipped questions. We can only conclude that we asked the wrong questions, and/or that the small number of people who responded did not have the relevant experience to be able to answer.

However, we think that the responses also support our view that you don't need to ask many people what they think, in order to get some very interesting and useful replies.

This summary report will be forwarded to the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Drug and Alcohol Action Team along with all individual comments.

Our summary

Very few people engaged with this survey, and we cannot draw any conclusion, other than that this is not particularly unusual, in our experience.

The people who did respond shared a concern about a culture of social acceptance of excessive drinking, or drug use, in Scilly. This is not new, and it is acknowledged that it's difficult to tackle.

Many expressed worries about the effects of this culture on children and young people. Comments about underage drinking were less censorious and more concerned with the need to address the causes and the example set by adults.

From this small sample we can take a message that there is a perceived risk to children and young people on the islands, and that adult behaviour must be addressed to reduce this, with better education and support across all age groups.

Summary of responses

1. Do you have concerns about the effects of drug or alcohol use?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Yes | 23 |
| No | 5 |
| Skipped question | 2 |

2. Do you think drug and alcohol related harm is an issue in the Isles of Scilly?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| Skipped question | 27 |

Two people gave a comment: that it is unavoidably an issue, in an environment where there is little else to do; and a belief that 'a lot of people drink a lot of alcohol' at home.

3. Is your concern about: (you can tick more than one)

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Yourself | 5 |
| Another adult | 8 |
| A young person | 3 |
| Effects in the community | 14 |
| Skipped question | 8 |

4. What works well or has been most helpful in reducing harm and promoting recovery, for the individual?

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Tell us what works well | 2 |
| I don't know | 9 |
| Skipped question | 19 |

Two people gave a comment: that professional, expert support is most appropriate; and being in a different environment where alcohol is not the prime refreshment or entertainment.

5. What has not worked so well or needs to be improved, for the individual?

| | |
|--|----|
| Tell us what has not worked so well or could be improved | 2 |
| I don't know | 9 |
| Skipped question | 19 |

One person said 'society embracing alcohol as so socially important'. One person noted the risk of reliance on alcohol for people who are lonely.

6. What concerns you most about drug and alcohol use in the community?

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Answered question | 13 |
| Skipped question | 17 |

Thirteen people gave a comment. Nine people referred to concerns about young people: use of drugs and alcohol, but primarily the example set by adults and the effects of a culture of social acceptance of excessive drinking, on young people.

There was also an acknowledgement of the effect of this culture on adults: concerns about the health effects of excessive drinking, and the difficulties of addressing an individual's drinking. One person felt that there is not enough information about services, or resources, to provide support.

There were three comments concerning the effects of antisocial behaviour in the community, and on the reputation of the islands; but also a comment about social isolation and drinking at home.

7. What works well or has been most helpful in reducing harm?

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Tell us what works well | 4 |
| I don't know | 9 |
| Skipped question | 17 |

Four people gave a comment, variously that good parenting and professional support is key; also that time should be given to underlying mental or physical problems.

8. What has not worked so well or needs to be improved?

| | |
|--|----|
| Tell us what has not worked so well or could be improved | 5 |
| I don't know | 7 |
| Skipped question | 18 |

Five people gave a comment. These covered the need for more guidance from parents and school, more support from health services to encourage people to self-monitor, and a wider range of services.

9. If the Drug and Alcohol Action Team could improve 3 things in 2017-18, what would make the greatest improvement and difference?

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Answered question | 11 |
| Skipped question | 19 |

Eleven people came up with a range of suggestions.

These covered:

- Improved access to and awareness of services, including mental health services.
- Advice and support for individuals in discussing their concerns with someone they're worried about.
- Tackle the culture of acceptance of alcohol abuse across all ages: find and use statistics on alcohol consumption on the islands; hold a public campaign/conversation about alcohol harm.
- Focus on alcohol consumption in health checks; discuss the impact on finances and wellbeing.
- Provide more, affordable, physical activity sessions as an alternative to going to the pub.
- Better education for young people through school and youth groups, and by addressing the issue with parents.
- Find out about the motivation for young people to use drink and drugs.
- More obvious and effective measures to prevent and penalise the supply of drugs.