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Strategic Plan 2010-2013 – Early Years, Formative Years and Teenage Years – the Continuum

“Focus groups consulted by the Youth Commission believed that alcohol education shouldn’t just include the facts, but should cover issues related to living with harmful drinking and confidence-building.”¹

Updated March 2010

¹ Report of Recommendations – Scottish Youth Commission on Alcohol – March 2010

Strategic Plan – Early Years, Formative Years and Teenage Years – the Continuum.

This Plan outlines the framework for our work with parents, children and young people from the very earliest years through the formative years and teenage years to adulthood. The plan is clearly aimed at children but acknowledges the role parents and carers play in children's learning.

By developing a dialogue on the impact that alcohol can have on the children of Scotland we hope to:

- increase the number of practitioners and agencies working with children to be actively involved in this issue
- develop and disseminate interventions and initiatives throughout Scotland and
- develop and pilot a programme for parents that raises awareness of the role that parents have in their children's development.

The challenge of preventing alcohol related harm in early, formative and teenage years is four fold:

- to raise awareness of the impact of alcohol misuse on children
- to improve the lives of the estimated 65,000 children affected by alcohol misuse
- to build understanding and resilience in children so that they are able to deal with alcohol issues
- to influence a change in parents/adults drinking.

This challenge is daunting; but this has to be met if we are to change Scotland's drinking culture.

This strategic plan outlines our aims in four areas:

1. Pre birth – Attitudinal Change
2. Early Years Intervention 0-4 years
3. Formative Years Intervention 5-11 years
4. Teenage Years Intervention 12 – 19 years

What we plan to do

2010 onwards

Raise awareness of the role that parents have in the development of their children across the age spectrum – birth to adulthood

Improve parental and carers' knowledge of alcohol issues and the potential impact on their children and families

2010 - 2013

Disseminate two programmes – one for use in early years environments and the other for use with children aged 5- 11 years

By the end of 2011

Develop programmes/approaches for parents and teenagers

Pre-birth - Attitudinal Change

Positive parenting has a crucial role in children's development. Studies have shown that it is not who the parent is, or their social background that moulds a child, rather it is what a parent **does** that is important.² Some people believe that parents have little influence on their children and how they develop, however there is a raft of evidence that counters this view. Kyle L. Kostelecky, in his article 'Parental attachment, academic achievement, life events and their relationship to alcohol and drug use during adolescence' highlights the fact that the most important factor in fostering resiliency and invulnerability for adolescents is bonding to a caring adult, often found in a parental relationship.³

Children reflect the world in which they live. Children are what they learn⁴ - if their world is safe, full of good relationships and is a good experience then a child is more likely to become a productive member of society. If they grow up in a chaotic world that is lacking in good relationships and good experience, they are more likely to have poor relationships and are much more likely to be impulsive, inattentive and even violent.

Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: A Framework for Action contains a section on supporting families and communities.⁵ This highlights the harm that excessive drinkers do to their immediate families and the need to work with parents in terms of understanding alcohol issues and how their behaviour influences their children.

Much has been written, researched, and spoken⁶ about the impact that parents have on their children. Now is the time for action if we are to change attitudes, beliefs and culture.

What we will do from 2010 onwards

- **Identify individuals, organisations and networks that Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS) can work with to raise awareness of the role of parents/carers in children's development e.g. Scottish Network of Alcohol Practitioners for the Young**
- **Champion parenting programmes**
- **Work with existing parenting programmes to include information on alcohol and its affect on families**
- **Disseminate AFS Pre-Birth/Alcohol and Pregnancy information along with information on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

² Department for Children, Schools and Families, Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress 2006

³ Parental attachment, academic achievement, life events and their relationship to alcohol and drug use during adolescence Kyle L Kostelecky : Journal of Adolescence 28 (2005) page 665-669

⁴ Children learn what they live : Parenting to inspire values Dr D L. Nolte & R Harris Published 1998

⁵ Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: A framework for Action - March 2009 Scottish Government

⁶ Aberdeen JADAT Alcohol Strategy Consultation – May 2008

Early Years - 0- 4 years

The Early Years Framework⁷ identified the following four themes for future development:

- building parenting and family capacity pre and post birth
- creating communities that provide a supportive environment for children and families
- delivering integrated services that meet the holistic needs of children and families
- developing a suitable workforce to support the framework.

This framework is aimed at improving outcomes for children, parents and communities. There is very strong and clear evidence to show the benefits of providing high quality early years and children's services. In economic terms, major studies around the world show an annual return of around 16% with biggest savings in criminal justice, health, education and employment.⁸

Parent Education – is the process of providing parents and other primary caregivers with specific knowledge and childrearing skills with the goal of promoting the development and competence of their children. Our work in pre-school settings, formal and community settings will enhance parental education regarding alcohol related harm.

What we will do during 2010-2011

- **Ensure that parents are better informed on physical and mental well being in early years before issues of alcohol and its misuse arise**
- **Disseminate the Oh Lila programme for parents and children in primary care, pre-school and community settings**
- **Develop training for practitioners in the use of the resources**
- **Train trainers to disseminate ABC programmes for early years**
- **Develop appropriate additional resources for both parents and children**
- **Work with organisations who work to combat social exclusion and promote inclusion for disadvantaged children that increases self esteem, reduces isolation, promotes play & development and parenting work**

⁷ The Scottish Government and COSLA (2008) Early Years and Early Intervention : A Joint Scottish Government and COSLA Policy Statement

⁸ Reference: Alan Sinclair presentation to Scottish Futures Forum; Approaches to Alcohol and Drugs in Scotland, A Question of Architecture

Formative Years – 5-11 years

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project Report⁹ by the Institute of Education (University of London) was the first longitudinal study of young children's development between the ages of 3 and 7 years. It found that pre-school experience (nursery, playschool etc) enhances children's development, in terms of cognitive attainment, sociology and concentration; children with 2 years of good quality early education were 4 to 6 months ahead of those children who were brought up entirely at home.

The Curriculum for Excellence¹⁰ aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3-18 years. This will apply wherever learning is taking place, whether in the community, in schools, colleges or other settings. The curriculum will focus on outcomes with a broad general education. Our plan to work from the early years, through formative years to teenage years fits well in this new development.

What we will do during 2010-2013

- **Develop a programme of workshops for parents and children on physical and mental well being that**
 - (i) **begins to explore the attitudes, beliefs and cultures that surround alcohol within Scotland**
 - (ii) **reinforces the importance of relationships and role modelling in the family home and**
 - (iii) **encourages parents to interact with their children that results in positive, sustaining family cultures**
- **Disseminate the Rory Learning Resource for children in formal and community settings.**
- **Develop an interactive alcohol awareness programme for children aged 9-11 that builds on the Rory Learning Resource**
- **Develop training for practitioners in the use of the resources**
- **Train trainers to disseminate ABC programmes for formative years**

⁹ The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project : Findings the Pre School Period Kathy Sylva et al (2003)

¹⁰ Curriculum for excellence: building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching 2008 Scottish Government

Teenage Years – 12-19 years

Building on the premise that reinforcement works, interventions that originate in pre-school and are continued through the formative years should be continued into teenage years. AFS believes that a continuum of parenting programmes/approaches has to be developed. Describing initiatives as 'parenting programmes' or making them obligatory diminishes their effectiveness and fails to attract those who could benefit from a structured approach. It is our intention to create innovative approaches to engage parents including the hard to reach.

We believe a conversation between parents and children on the issues of substance misuse to highlight the part that alcohol plays and in particular the issues of awareness, consumption¹¹ and associated behaviours. This conversation will be stimulated by initiatives within school and community settings and will be supported by a parents' resource.

Being parents of teenagers isn't always easy. As children step into the world of adulthood they begin to liberate themselves, assert themselves and become demanding and independent. This is the time when the problems and risks associated with substance misuse and the issues of experimentation must be addressed.

This is also a time to change and create new relationships between parents and teenagers.

What we will do in 2010-2013

- **Raise the profile of the role of parents in**
 - (i) creating a good atmosphere at home**
 - (ii) expressing their opinions**
 - (iii) encouraging young people to say what they think and listening to their point of view**
 - (iv) taking responsibility for their actions and the actions of their teenagers**
- **Foster a sense of well being amongst teenagers that emphasises the need for a change in mind set from being a child to a young adult**
- **Develop a resource for parents to stimulate dialogue between parents and children and inform about the affect of alcohol on young people's development.**
- **Disseminate the LiveWise4YoungPeople programme in formal and community settings.**
- **Develop the "Choices" programme for young people aged 14-16 years of age**
- **Trial ServeWise Online Course with 16-18 year olds**
- **Develop the programme developed for The Scottish Football Association "Fit for Football- Fit for Life" for 12-19 year olds**
- **Develop training for practitioners in the use of the resources, DrinkWise4YoungPeople & "Choices"**
- **Train the Trainers to disseminate ABC programmes for teenage years**

¹¹ NHS Health Scotland – How Much are People in Scotland Really Drinking? 2008

Summary

This plan outlines AFS' approach to:

- working with and championing existing parenting programmes
- developing programmes for children that enhance the Curriculum for Excellence in respect of promoting health and wellbeing
- developing new parenting programmes/approaches/workshops
- developing new resources for parents and children
- working with other organisations to combat social exclusion and promote inclusion
- raising the profile of the role of parents in creating good home environments where they, and their children, can express points of view whilst accepting responsibility for their actions and the actions of their children.

Conclusion

The work contained within this strategic plan from the very earliest years through formative years, teenage years to adulthood forms the basis for a change in the **attitudes, beliefs and culture** that will impact on the long term effects of alcohol misuse on the health of the nation.