

# BME and Rural Community Alcohol Project

April 2011

# About Mentor

The mission of Mentor, the drug prevention charity, is to prevent drug and alcohol misuse by promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

[www.mentoruk.org.uk](http://www.mentoruk.org.uk)

## About the Project

The BME and Rural Community Alcohol (BARCA) Project was carried out by Mentor in Scotland between January 2009 and December 2010.

It was made possible through the generous funding of the Robertson Trust.

For further information about the project or Mentor's other work please visit our website or contact us at the addresses below.

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## Executive Summary

Mentor's BME and Rural Community Alcohol Project (BARCA) was carried out to improve the evidence base for alcohol prevention initiatives amongst young people from distinct communities in Scotland. Six pilots were conducted with established youth projects.

Key differences emerged within BME and rural communities on attitudes to alcohol and different approaches are recommended.

Amongst BME communities, there was a clear sense of cultural pride and the importance of family. The young people had high levels of self respect, confidence and were ambitious to achieve in life. Any issues with alcohol were hidden from the public eye.

In white Scottish rural communities, drinking alcohol was primarily seen as what 'everyone' does. Many drank in order to get drunk. We found a lack of self-esteem, ambition and pride. A need for sustained interventions was identified.

These contrasting viewpoints illustrate the need for further research to establish

how the values and beliefs of ethnic communities may be used to encourage predominantly white Scottish youths to rethink their own values and beliefs; and how best to convince young people that alcohol misuse is unnecessary in those communities where it is a cultural norm.

The project also highlighted that, where harms are reduced, young people will actively choose healthier lifestyles. Thus successful prevention programmes may have additional, far-reaching outcomes.

BARCA supports the proposition that successful alcohol education projects need to employ a broad range of evidenced based early interventions that are sensitive and appropriate to the local community, and must be youth-led, with young people at their heart.

# Background

Mentor is a charity focusing on the prevention of drug misuse and the promotion of the health and wellbeing of young people. In 2007, Mentor completed the three-year Coastal and Ex-mining Areas Project in England. The project found that drugs and alcohol were disrupting the lives of young people and these communities, because of their isolation and the availability, and sometimes acceptability, of drugs and alcohol; and that this disruption was increasing. In 2008, Mentor opened a Scottish office. Consultations with youth agencies, Government, funders and Alcohol and Drug Partnerships highlighted the need for new ideas to support isolated Scottish communities and groups within BME and Economic Migrant communities.

Alcohol misuse in Scotland costs the economy £3.56 billion (*The Societal Cost of Alcohol Misuse in Scotland for 2007*, Scottish Government, January 2010). Alcohol is deeply embedded within the Scottish culture in both urban and rural areas, and this is true for white Scottish and minority ethnic and religious groups. Historically, minority ethnic groups report lower rates of drinking, whilst fewer individuals present to alcohol services for problems related to alcohol misuse. However, research by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (*Ethnicity and Alcohol: A Review of UK Literature*, July 2010) finds second generation BME groups' drinking habits may be similar those of the general population. This research also suggests a lack of knowledge of the true extent of alcohol use within minority communities, who are under-represented



# Methodology

in seeking treatment and advice on alcohol problems. This may lead agencies to underestimate need amongst these groups.

The aims of BARCA were to pilot alcohol misuse prevention programmes with young people from the BME and rural communities; to evidence the most effective prevention in individual communities; and to seek to identify any common themes that could provide guidance for other BME and rural community projects on alcohol misuse in Scotland and beyond.

BARCA selected six established youth projects, working with age groups between 11 and 25 years, three from urban immigrant community and three from rural projects. Details of the selection criteria are set out in Appendix 1. Mentor worked with each project to establish a tailored, youth-led alcohol awareness and education programme. Each was rooted in a well-established prevention methodology; diversionary activities, peer education or arts-based activity.

Through individualised programmes, Mentor aimed to:

- Increase knowledge, skills and experience amongst project workers in creating, delivering and evaluating prevention services for children and young people
- Support and engage young people and local agencies to develop and implement local projects to address local needs

- Develop a range of educational tools specifically for their community

Focus groups were held with young people of each youth group to establish the format they wanted for their pilot. Ongoing consultations ensured their continued influence on the development of their project.

Project outcomes were developed by the young people and Mentor working together with partners. They were identified as:

- Increased awareness and knowledge of alcohol
- Increased personal safety
- Reduction in risky behaviours
- Increased self-confidence and self esteem
- Increased and sustained access to healthier lifestyles and opportunities

Each project was encouraged to have a maximum of two further individual outcomes.

BARCA's Advisory Group consisted of representatives from Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, Alcohol Focus Scotland, the Lothian and Borders Police, the Scottish National Health Service, Local Authorities, Scottish Youth Parliament, alcohol youth workers and diversity youth workers from the voluntary sector.

BARCA was externally evaluated and each project self-evaluated following training and support. Partners in Evaluation Scotland (PIES) was responsible for self-evaluation capacity

building, evaluation support and external appraisals. In the first year, PIES developed an outcome-focused evaluation framework and reporting system together with monitoring and evaluation training for the six projects, with analysis and feedback at six months. In Year 2, PIES conducted a 360° appraisal of two projects selected by the Advisory Group. Because of budget constraints, no more than two detailed appraisals were undertaken.

Three projects also received alcohol awareness and education training.

In Year 2, all the projects came together for a residential weekend. The aims were to

- Bring together different cultures to share projects and their learning
- Develop cultural awareness
- Reward the young people for their work

Over three days, the young people took part in a range of outdoor activities, sharing learning from their projects in the evenings. Cultural sessions enabled groups to share different social norms, including views on alcohol. During the weekend, the young people bonded as a strong group who respected each other and their viewpoints.

Project learning has been shared with policy makers, funders and practitioners to encourage the effective implementation of alcohol prevention projects across Scotland.

“Very useful and enjoyable day. I learned a lot! I have never received support like this from other funders and it has been incredibly valuable”

Core Spirits Blairgowrie

### Unexpected Developments/Hurdles

**San Jai Chinese project**, after 26 years of service to the Chinese community in Glasgow, lost its core funding and closed on 31 March 2010. **Universal Connections** in Douglas also suffered financial challenges and had to move to smaller premises, which limited the numbers who could participate.

**Within BME communities**, we encountered a cultural reluctance to discuss issues around young people and alcohol. We found when we asked Alcohol and Drug Action Teams (now Alcohol and Drug Partnerships) to advise on the feasibility a BME project in their area, that some had no contacts. Some ADPs reported that BME projects had informed them alcohol and drugs were not issues in their communities. Many parents and young people expressed concern.

In Dundee, Bharatiya Ashram found it extremely difficult to recruit young people from the Muslim community because alcohol is forbidden within the culture. There were also some misapprehensions around religion. Many thought Bharatiya Ashram would be based on Hindu culture. In fact, it is multi-cultural.

# Results

All six projects evaluated their programme as successful. In particular, they rated highly partnerships they had been able to form with other organisations and agencies, and the number of young people they had attracted.

Many pilots exceeded their expectations in engaging young people, who relished the opportunity to present their own views and take a lead in how to talk about alcohol.

All the young people had a strong opinion on the subject and often felt that their views had been ignored in the past. By developing their own projects, they gained ownership in an enjoyable way.

244 young people were directly involved, helping to devise, direct and deliver the six programmes.

Some 600 young people were also indirectly influenced.

“The support I received was fantastic, the workers were really good and because they were roughly my own age I actually listened for a change. They didn’t preach at me or tell me off; they just listened and pointed me in the right direction.”

Young person (14) Blairgowrie

All six projects involved their key stakeholders. Partnerships with other voluntary agencies allowed the young people to look at the broader implications of alcohol use, such as sexual health and wellbeing. Two projects, Bharatiya Ashram and Core Spirits, obtained further funding from Dundee ADP and The Gannochy Trust respectively.



## Dramatic improvements to life chances with peer education; Blairgowrie, Perth & Kinross: 'Core Spirits' SCYD Strathmore Centre for Youth Development

SCYD provides alternatives for young people to spending evenings drinking in the streets. The reduction in anti-social behaviour also benefits the local community. Working with Mentor, this group set up Core Spirits, a project creating individualised peer support. Young people supported each other to minimise risk and vulnerability to alcohol misuse and related issues such as personal safety and sexual exploitation.

Core Spirits built up a core team of peer supporters who underwent intensive training to ensure that they could advise, support and provide effective information to young people within their community. This included creating board games, computer programmes and other materials. This initiative was supported by the local police who referred young people to the service. A support network was set up so that those involved could move on and realise their potential.

Core Spirits' Alcohol Awareness Fun day at the local high school was attended by some 300 young people.

Those who received the support spoke about the impact of the assistance they received on their lives and how this motivated them to become involved in the project as peer supporters also.

Peer support at Blairgowrie was offered in conjunction with other forms of intervention, including advice on employment and/or training.

This project highlighted that peer education helped to sustain young people within projects and enabled them to make

informed choices around their alcohol use and their future prospects.

Evaluation throughout this programme measured the changes in attitudes and awareness associated with the misuse of alcohol, both for the peer educators and for participants. It also highlighted that, if harms are reduced, such as hanging around with someone who has been classified as a bad influence, young people will **actively** choose healthier lifestyles. The peer educators made dramatic changes in their lives. Three went on to university or college and four becoming more involved with other community projects. Those who received the support reported that they now wanted to train as peer supporters, showing how this model of early intervention may quite rapidly move towards self-sustainability.

SCYD aims for the programme to become embedded in Blairgowrie, reaching the young people of the community and providing alternatives to drinking.

Project , Location	Original Target Number of Young People	Actual numbers of Young People	Indirect beneficiaries (Young People)	Stakeholders partnering
San Jai Chinese Project, Glasgow	15	19	21	NHS Glasgow & Greater Clyde Glasgow Council
SCORES Scotland Edinburgh	15	35	14	Caledonia Youth
Bharatiya Ashram Dundee	20	29	22	Dundee Rep Theatre Dundee SPACE St Pauls RC Academy Dundee Alcohol and Drug Partnership
Core Spirits Blairgowrie, Perthshire	10	18	390	Tayside Police High School Youth Justice social work Fast Forward
Focus on Alcohol Angus	130	126	213	Websters High School Angus College
Universal Connections Douglas, Lanarkshire	20	17	20	Parkour Core Connect RX
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>590</b>	

### Tackling taboos: Glasgow: San Jai Chinese Family Project

San Jai was a longstanding project existing to meet the needs of the Chinese community in Glasgow. Project workers felt alcohol would be a taboo subject for the local community. But at the initial focus group, it became clear that many young people used alcohol. One had been admitted to the local hospital because of alcohol misuse.

San Jai designed a range of fortnightly sporting activities to challenge the young people to inspire and promote health and wellbeing. Feelings and thoughts on alcohol were captured at each event and a survey of parents was carried out in order that the young people could learn about parental attitudes to alcohol.

“The value of these activities provided a platform for team building and personal development. Helping these kids face new and exciting challenges enabled them to have a new way of thinking.”

Project Worker

## Impact on awareness and knowledge of alcohol

213 young people reported increased awareness and knowledge.

Some kept a diary of their own alcohol intake as a first step to reducing the amount they were drinking. All could talk about the impact that drugs and alcohol have, and the young people showed understanding of their own substance taking.

**77% of young people involved in the project said they had reduced their consumption of alcohol.**

## Impact on personal safety and risky behaviours

Young people became far more aware of the risks they take when drinking; for example violent confrontations, unsafe sex, and, for young women, the risks of sexual exploitation. As a result, young people were more likely to take action to increase their safety when drinking.

Young women showed awareness of link between substance use and unsafe sexual activity.

## Impact on self-confidence and self esteem

The projects encouraged participation; for example, some young people took on the new role of peer educator, others joined a drama group. During the project, young people delivered workshops to groups of up to 20, took leading roles in dramatic performances, faced their fears on agility apparatus and took the lead and presenting at their open day

The most dramatic changes came from within rural communities. BME communities reported less variation

## Working with local schools to maximise reach Focus on Alcohol Angus

The young people of the focus group in Angus wanted to make the issue of alcohol misuse fun and relaxed believing, correctly as it turned out, this would encourage others to get involved.

This project took place over two centres, Angus College and Webster's High School. Students at Angus College produced a multimedia exhibition of photography, graphic arts and video exploring the culture of Angus and how alcohol, drugs and solvents affect the wellbeing of students. The exhibition demonstrated a fantastic array of talent. At the same time, the young artists seized the opportunity to share, anonymously, with key community figures their views on how alcohol issues should be presented to young people. The show also enabled students to gain experience organising a public exhibition and dealing with funding.

Students at Webster's High School held a number of festival days in the area, aimed at young people.

Pupils got the fire service, police, A&E doctors, Mentor's peer educators and a local fitness company to attend. More than 100 young people attended and learned about the risks, dangers and consequences of alcohol, allowing them to make more informed choices.

By working through local schools, this project was able to reach large numbers of young people very efficiently.

because the majority of their young people were highly confident at the outset.

### Impact on lifestyles and opportunities

Choosing positive alternatives was key to increasing confidence. **Amongst the three projects that focused on this outcome, 47% of young people have permanently taken up a sport they had not tried previously.** Others regularly attended project workshops, wished to become peer educators in their community, or volunteered for local projects.

Most heartening has been the efforts made by the young people and the staff of each project, and their ambitions to

sustain the projects that Mentor helped set up.

“I always knew that alcohol was a big problem in Scotland but I did not realise just how many people abuse it to help them forget about their problems”

Young Person (13)

### Alternatives to Alcohol; promoting healthy attitudes Edinburgh, SCOREScotland

Alcohol was viewed very negatively by these young people. Some felt that even by discussing the issue, alcohol was being promoted. An 11-year old boy stated that one session had been ‘tainted’ because alcohol had been debated. However, older youths within the group were more open to conversation on the subject.

The SCOREScotland group wanted to develop a programme to promote alternatives to alcohol. Their project aimed to offer an holistic approach to healthy living and they devised a programme of adventurous activities, including white water rafting, rock climbing and dry slope skiing. For many, this was a first opportunity to take part in these challenging physical activities.

After each session, they documented their experiences and then created a resource to demonstrate how sporting activities can make you feel good about yourself. They used their reflections to create a DVD, highlighting that young people can have a good time without alcohol, emphasising instead the thrill of excitement and adrenalin rush that comes when throwing yourself down a turbulent river in a small boat!

“Alcohol is bad, it is evil and it ruins people’s lives.”

Boy aged 11

# Discussion

## Findings within BME Communities; Bharativa Ashram, San Jai Chinese Family Project, SCOREScotland

BARCA worked with young people aged between 11 and 25 from the Chinese, Muslim, Indian, Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Polish communities through two multi-cultural projects and a Chinese project based in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

From the outset, all the young people from each project were very keen to form a focus group to discuss the development of a programme for them and their community. Their enthusiasm evaporated when the issue of alcohol

was introduced.

All were very aware of the impact of alcohol within Scottish culture and acknowledged that people from all races were at risk of misusing alcohol. However, the word 'alcohol' conjured images of drunkenness, shouting, fighting and falling over in the street; behaviour that these young people did not wish to be associated with.

The young people within all three projects had very negative ideas around alcohol, although these feelings did appear to diminish as they got older. Nonetheless, young people from all BME projects said there were more important

## Exploring sensitive issues through drama; Dundee: Bharatiya Ashram

At the outset, a number of young people attended Bharatiya Ashram, an Indian education centre that works to bring different religions together and had strong relationships with local theatre and dance companies, but there was no formal youth group. This was set up by Bharatiya Ashram staff in order to take part in BARCA.

Bharatiya Ashram used their strength in dance and drama to develop a drama which focused on why people drink, how to enjoy alcohol, how to drink sensibly and individuals can allow the negatives to outweigh the positives. Religious views and generational differences were incorporated, enabling all ages to witness the changes in modern society.

This project had a significant impact on the young people's personal and social education, encouraging participants to discuss feelings and sensitive issues in a secure environment. Role play was particularly helpful.

"It was like putting on a mask. I was able to talk about my feelings but because I was acting as someone else, it was easy."

Young person (13)



things in life than drinking. Getting an education, taking part in fun activities, spending time with family and friends were high on their agendas.

These young people demonstrated high levels of self esteem and confidence with ambitions for their future; alcohol certainly did not play a part in this.

The programmes developed by these projects reflected these attitudes. Two involved diversionary physical and sporting activities, the third dance and drama. They were designed to show that these activities can make you feel good and alcohol does not. However, whilst these positive messages are extremely important, they may be less useful to those most at risk of alcohol misuse.

Within these community projects, family was very important. The young people spent much of their free time with the family and were vocal in expressing respect for family members.

The Chinese project undertook a survey with parents to discuss their views and experiences of alcohol and held a well-attended open day to enable parents to experience a session. The other two projects found engaging parents more difficult. Parents from the South Asian

communities in Dundee (Bharativa Ashram) and Edinburgh (SCOREScotland) expressed concerns.

Project workers met parents and some children were consequently removed from particular sessions. Parental and community concern also impacted on the residential weekend, when the Elder of the Mosque cancelled the group's trip at the last minute.

### Findings within Rural Communities;

#### Core Spirits, Focus on Alcohol Angus, Universal Connections

The BARCA project was developed to address the emerging needs of young people in rural areas.

Pilot projects were set up with young

“Boredom, lack of access to facilities can lead to risky behaviour in rural areas... they are more likely to experiment.”

Project worker Core Spirits Blairgowrie

## Challenging the social norm; Douglas, South Lanarkshire: Universal Connections

Project staff were concerned for the young people because of their underage alcohol misuse, which also impacted on the local community. Young people were aware of the dangers of alcohol but saw it as 'fun', alleviating boredom. They believed their alcohol misuse would continue.

Focus groupwork highlighted that these young people felt they had a good knowledge of alcohol. They were challenged to explore and develop their understanding by talking to family and community members and the police, to research health, the law and anti-social behaviour and the impact on parents and community. They then debated their findings. The young people realised, following a visit from the peer educators based at Blairgowrie, the critical part played by peer support. They filmed their debates to produce a documentary DVD and followed this up with an animated film - a useful peer education tool, they proposed.

people aged between 12 and 21 in Perthshire (Core Spirits), South Lanarkshire (Universal Connections) and Angus. At initial focus groups, young people were immediately very enthusiastic about undertaking a project around alcohol. All were very open about their views and use of alcohol. Many openly shared their experiences of 'great drunken nights out' to confirm and enhance social status within their peer group. They had some knowledge about alcohol but did not feel they needed help or support. They often suggested they did not care about the negative consequences of alcohol use, and indeed argued that these messages often make alcohol more appealing.

All projects demonstrated in varying degrees the disadvantage experienced by the young people in relation to where they lived. Both staff and young people described a dearth of local facilities and how lack of transport prevented access to services in major towns. Staff spoke of the young people wanting in ambition,

especially about job prospects. Young people felt that they were "'destined to stay in this dump". They were short on pride and self respect not only for themselves but for their community and country.

Mentor challenged these young people to question their beliefs and attitudes, not only around alcohol but also their own futures and what they might achieve. It was telling that many of them struggled with this task.

Initially, each group planned to develop a programme to highlight the fun aspects of alcohol. Through development and partnership working, the young people were able to identify a more serious side to alcohol misuse. They went on to develop projects which underscored the substantial changes in their attitudes towards their own and others' use of alcohol.

The influence of family was again a key factor, but for different reasons. The young people described how they rarely

saw their parents who were often away from home in the evening or at weekends. They reported that their parents often gave them money to get out of the house and that this money might be used to buy alcohol. Even though this is not what the money was intended for, many of the young people felt that their parents would not be concerned.

Mentor asked the young people to invite their parents to their project to discuss alcohol and to include them in the project. The young people were very uncomfortable about this and the majority adamantly refused. Many said that they did not wish to work with their parents, or that their parents would have no interest in taking part in a programme with them.

Project staff told us that in their experience it was difficult to persuade parents to attend programmes. The reasons ranged from time limitations to a sense that participation might reflect inadequate parenting skills.

# Recommendations

Young people and the communities that they come from are not uniform; they require and respond to a range of tailored interventions. A robust infrastructure with committed and experienced staff who involve young people in the design are key to developing a successful programme. Partners must also be included.

Youth projects must install better monitoring and evaluation checks to demonstrate their effectiveness. Much of the evidence gathered by projects was anecdotal. Most were good at monitoring activities, but record keeping and evaluation of outcomes must be improved.

In rural communities, there is a need for sustained interventions to provide alternative activities to drinking, and for continuing messages that help to change this culture. Communities should seek to raise rural young people's sense of pride in their local history, using community resources. Programmes should involve the whole community to help develop community spirit and parents should receive appropriate support and training to ensure that they are more informed about alcohol and its effects on young people.

In BME communities we found a need for interventions which provide messages and activities which allow young people to consider the harms that are associated with alcohol. We recommend that professionals address this by initially focusing on health and wellbeing overall, and encourage young people to consider

alcohol within this context. BME communities have much to teach wider society about alcohol misuse prevention, but also need to find ways to address with young people what we recognise to be a sensitive subject. Programmes should try to involve parents and carers. Project staff must be trained, be culturally aware and have credibility or they will fail to integrate into the community. Where necessary, BME communities should be supported to build dedicated services to address their own needs

In both rural and BME communities, a wide range of activities will reach a greater audience. Peer support models help to reinforce the message, whilst art, drama and music activities can be a way of exploring sensitive issues.

Programmes must be culturally appropriate and are available for those with literacy problems

We recommend that there are more opportunities for young people from diverse communities to come together to share learning and to celebrate their cultural heritages.

Interventions that can be shown to delay the onset of drinking alcohol, or reduce the harms for young drinkers should result in significant social and economic benefits to society. In order to evidence this we recommend that funders and commissioners should consider longer-term evaluations of promising practice.

# Appendix

During a mapping exercise, Mentor contacted 22 local projects; 15 rural and seven BME. 16, selected by BARCA's Advisory Group, were visited.

Project Name	Locality	Brief Description	Selected?	Reason
Swietlica	Edinburgh	A Polish voluntary support group for all ages that meets once a week	X	Voluntary group no dedicated staff or financial stability
BCDP ( Black Community Development Project	Edinburgh	Provide a range of services for all ages but a specific advice and support group for 5-18 year old BME youth	X	Disruptions to staff – project would be delayed
Polish Saturday Club	Edinburgh	Voluntary Polish group meeting Saturdays; entertainment & educational classes to all ages	X	No dedicated staff or financial stability
Score Scotland	Edinburgh	Aim is to eliminate racism for all ethnic minorities in west of Edinburgh for all ages	Y	
Youth Counselling Services Agency	Glasgow	Supports and empowers young people to become active members of a diverse society	X	Already developed an alcohol support service
GARA: Glasgow Against Racism Alliance	Glasgow	Tackling racism for all throughout Glasgow	X	Umbrella agency
San Jai Chinese Family Project	Glasgow	A family support project for all Chinese families in Glasgow	Y	
Yusuf Youth Initiative	Dundee	A Muslim Community project working with all ages	X	YYI identified a drug problem not alcohol
International Women's Centre	Dundee	To promote the role of ethnic women in society	X	Issues around the topic of alcohol
Bharatiya Ashram	Dundee	An Indian education centre to bring all cultures together	Y	
Gypsy Travelling and Information Project	Aberdeen	Working with travelling families providing advice and support	X	Loss of funding for the project
Face to Face	Galashiels (Borders)	Empowering and supporting young people in the border	X	Established substance misuse programme
Universal Connections	Douglas (South Lanarkshire)	For young people to take part in fun learning activities	Y	
Callendar Youth Project	Stirlingshire	Works with a range of young people	X	Good substance misuse project established
Strathmore Centre for Youth Development	Blairgowrie (Perth and Kinross)		Y	
Focus on Alcohol Angus	Angus Council – Kirriemuir		Y	