

# Factsheet

## Risky Behaviour: Young People and Alcohol

Participants in the DCSF consultation think that the health of young people is a risk, and have specific concerns about alcohol and drug use. Most agree that young people experiment with drugs and alcohol at a younger age nowadays. They may also come under pressure from friends and peers to experiment with alcohol and drugs.

### The Children's Plan Commitment

The Children's Plan set out a new commitment to publish an Action Plan on Young People and Alcohol later this year. To inform the Action Plan, DCSF is working closely with other Departments to look at whether more action on any or all of the following might help to reduce young people's alcohol consumption further:

- low price alcohol
- tougher enforcement measures
- alcohol advertising
- better alcohol education in schools
- more information or support for parents

### Context

The percentage of young people (u18s) who drink regularly is falling – but consumption of alcohol by young people who do drink has increased very sharply. Consumption by 11-15 years olds who drink doubled in the ten years to 2000 – and there is a sharply rising incidence of liver cirrhosis among people in their 20s. Drinking alcohol, particularly at a young age, is strongly correlated with a wide range of other teenage problems, including teenage pregnancy, crime, anti-social behaviour, use of illicit drugs, truancy and falling behind at school.

Historically, Government policy on drinking and young people has focused on tackling underage sales. However, the great majority of alcohol (some estimates suggest 90%) consumed by young people is not purchased by them.

To reflect this, the Government's revised alcohol strategy (Safe, Sensible, Social) identified reducing alcohol consumption by young people for the first time as an explicit Government objective – which is now reflected in the Department's PSA set through a new indicator. Safe, Sensible, Social also set out measures to broaden the Government's approach to the issue beyond underage sales and in particular to seek to influence the behaviour of both young people and parents.

Measures currently in development include:

- Work to clarify the evidence about the (social and medical) harm young people experience through drinking alcohol, overseen by an Expert Panel;
- Much clearer guidance for parents and young people (based on the fresh evidence described above) about the effects on children and young people of drinking alcohol and the levels, if any, that are safe
- A social marketing campaign, focused on u16s, to influence young people's drinking behaviour.



"I think we need facilities for teenagers, maybe a Friday night disco, without alcohol but with everything an adult club would have."  
**Young person ,  
on-line survey**

"I would increase the drinking limit and the smoking limit 'cause that's the main problem why they're getting into trouble."  
**Female, Gateshead**

"When it's dark there's no lighting and there's loads of teenagers in there [the park] and drinking... it depends on what they're wearing cos if they're wearing jeans it's OK but if they're wearing tracksuits you think I've just got to get away."  
**Birmingham,  
Yr 8, Female**

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# Questions

The Department is interested to hear your views on the questions below. If you would like to feed in your comments to this continuing dialogue, please email your responses, stating **which fact sheet** and **which question** you are answering, to [timetotalk.feedback@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:timetotalk.feedback@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)

- 1 What levels of drinking by young people are acceptable – and who should decide?
- 2 What is the role of parents in regulating their children's drinking?
- 3 Which policy measures are most likely to have an impact on young people's drinking?