PEER LED APPROACHES TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE EDUCATION

YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONSULTATION

FINAL REPORT

Peer led workshops work best

So THIS is how it REALLY is

Things that affect US

Fair enough... YOU are ‘one of us’ and we can relate to you

May 2011
The views expressed in this report are those of the young people who took part in this consultation and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Engaging young people in a dialogue around substance misuse and effective substance misuse education, and providing credible information to young people is key to the prevention arm of the Scottish Government’s national drugs strategy - The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland’s Drug Problem. As part of this Young Scot was asked by the Scottish Government to consider the views of young people throughout Scotland on peer led approaches to substance misuse education. Throughout this piece of work it was important that young people were regarded as part of the solution and not part of the problem.

The report details the background and purpose of the consultation, the methodology used to complete the consultation, and the outcomes of young people’s views.

The methods used to engage with young people involved a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods:

- National survey (both on and off line)
- Local Investigation Teams
- National Discussion Day

Using these different methods we have gathered a wealth of information about young people’s views on substance misuse education and how it should move forward both within and outside schools aligned with the health and wellbeing outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence, with some key findings to note.

National Survey

The national survey results and findings for the Local Investigation Teams have provided some contrasting information. Within the survey results it was clear that the majority of respondents not only received most of their drugs information and advice from teachers, but thought that this was the best way to learn about them. This was closely followed by parents, and highlights the key role that both teachers and parents have in providing relevant drug information to young people across Scotland.

Many of the young people surveyed had not heard of the term ‘peer education’ before which would suggest a lack of awareness of it as a method of education across Scotland. The survey results showed that most of the respondents would not get their information and advice from other young
people but, as has already been highlighted, from teachers and parents. However, when an explanation was provided on what peer education was, most thought that it would be a good way to learn about drugs. Overall, this would suggest a lack of awareness and understanding of peer education, rather than a lack of interest in using it.

Another interesting finding from the national survey was how little the internet was mentioned as a source of information on drugs. This stands out given the rise in the use and popularity of the internet as a source of information and means of communication, particularly amongst young people.

**Local Investigation Teams**
Seven Local Investigation Teams (LITs) were used to gain a real understanding of the issues around substance misuse directly from young people themselves. Although the Teams were all from different parts of Scotland, and one looked specifically at an existing alcohol peer education project rather than drugs, there were some common themes that arose from their findings.

The LITs found that peer education was seen as a positive way to learn about substance misuse and its impact, with peer educators themselves being viewed as credible educators. The importance of good training was considered an essential part of the peer education process and vital to providing a positive outcome for both the educators and those receiving the education.

As well as being educated by other young people, many of those involved in the investigations thought that someone who had used drugs in the past would be a credible educator and therefore a good way to learn about substance misuse.

A range of different reasons were attributed to why young people might take drugs, the mains being peer pressure, boredom and drug taking being normalised in certain areas (especially those with high levels of deprivation).

**National Discussion Day**
Table discussions during the day looked at action points and points that could be taken forward by young people, local services and the Scottish Government. School was considered to play a significant and important role for substance misuse education (including teachers and peer educators) but there was also recognition that it was important to work with young people not in school to ensure they
receive appropriate information and education. This links to local service delivery to create a consistent approach.

In terms of the information young people received, there was recognition that this should also cover coping with the substance misuse issues arising from family and friends as well as young people as individuals.

It was felt that the Scottish Government should ensure there is a consistent approach to substance misuse education for all young people so that work being carried out at both local and nationals levels complement each other. Additionally, enabling young people to be part of the debate on the issue was a desired outcome for the young people.
INTRODUCTION

Young Scot is the national youth information charity, supporting young people across Scotland aged 11 - 26 to make informed decisions and choices and to access opportunities. We do this through a variety of information channels, including books, magazines and online services such as the national youth information portal for Scotland – www.youngscot.org. Young Scot currently has 380,000 members and a network across all 32 Scottish local authorities through the Dialogue Youth partnership initiative.

It is our aim that the information we provide will enable young people across Scotland to:

- Make informed decisions and choices
- Turn their ideas into action
- Take advantage of the opportunities available to them in Scotland and across Europe
- Have the confidence and knowledge to take their place as active citizens in their communities on a local, national and global level

Young Scot, in partnership with local authority, statutory and voluntary sector providers, has significant experience in developing consultation processes and investigatory initiatives as part of a menu of connections enabling young people to be involved in, for example, community planning structures, national decision making processes and changing service delivery.

BACKGROUND

In March 2010 Young Scot was approached by the Drugs Policy Unit in the Scottish Government to carry out a consultation exercise with young people aged 12-19 across Scotland to find out what they think about peer led approaches to substance misuse education. Engaging young people in a dialogue around substance misuse and effective substance misuse education and providing credible information to young people is key to the prevention arm of the Scottish Government's national drugs strategy – The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland’s Drug Problem.

“The Scottish Government believes that preventing drug use is more effective than treating established drug problems. It is essential that we recognise the impact of actions that a wide range of policies will have. However, we must realise that people will always consider using drugs, and it is crucial that no-one in Scotland today takes drugs out of ignorance of the consequences. The provision of accurate
information to the public is vital, as is effective communication with young people in, and out with the school environment.”

(The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland’s Drug Problem, May 2008)

In delivering the outcomes of the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework, Young Scot recognises that young people must be seen as full partners who can contribute to exploring ideas and solutions as well as supporting implementation and delivery. This ‘co-production’ approach, which engages young people in sensitising services, also supports the Scottish Government Framework “Valuing Young People: Principles and connections to support young people to achieve their potential”.

In the area of learning about the challenges of drugs in modern life, young people must be seen as experts of their own experience, and be given the opportunity to share their views about approaches and methodologies which can raise awareness, cause attitudinal shifts and lead to behaviour change.

PURPOSE

The consultation was devised to seek the views of a wide range of young people across Scotland about Substance Misuse Education, the potential of using peer led approaches to it and its potential on young people influence in relation to education, and opportunities to developing best practice via A Curriculum for Excellence in both school and community settings. A Curriculum for Excellence applies to all young people aged 3 to 18 in Scotland, with health and wellbeing as one of the eight curriculum areas. The curriculum includes all of the health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes planned and provided for in the different places where they go to learn (early year’s centres/nurseries, schools, colleges and others working in partnership with schools).

Peer Education is a term used to describe a range of initiatives where young people from a similar age group, background, culture and/or social status educate and inform each other about a wide variety of issues or topics. The idea behind peer education (relevant to substance misuse education) is that young people are in the best position to encourage healthy behaviour in each other as they are more likely to trust their peers and view them as a credible source of information.

The guiding principle throughout the piece of work was that young people were considered part of the solution and not the problem.

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1 The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland’s Drug Problem, Scottish Government, May 2008
2 Valuing Young People: Principles and connections to support young people to achieve their potential, Scottish Government, April 2009
3 Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3, Scottish Government, June 2008
The high level aims of the consultation were:

- To explore the different aspects of substance misuse education, including what role young people themselves have in tackling substance misuse
- To give young people the opportunity to share their experiences and express their views in relation to substance misuse more generally
- To enable young people’s experiences and views to shape the future development of substance misuse education in Scotland

Findings from the consultation will add to the current evidence base on substance misuse education. They will enable the Scottish Government’s Drug Policy Unit and other relevant policy areas to consider young people’s views, when looking at how substance misuse education can be provided in a meaningful, useful and appropriate way to meet the needs of young people in Scotland.
METHODOLOGY
It was agreed between Young Scot and Scottish Government to use a quantitative and qualitative methodology, in order to provide breadth and depth of understanding of the issue. We created a national survey and recruited seven Local Investigation Teams who carried out their own investigations on the topic at a local level. In addition to this, the Scottish Government were also keen to find out the views of particular targeted groups of young people, including medical students and ‘harder to reach’ young people, to ensure that a wide range of views were gathered and heard. Our methods of consultation for these were focus groups and interviews.

The consultation culminated in a National Discussion Day – A Matter of Substance – held on the 19\textsuperscript{th} January 2011, where all Local Investigation Teams presented their findings to key stakeholders, including other young people and relevant policy and decision makers from national and local government, NHS, police, Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and third sector organisations. The consultation methods used were designed to complement each other and lead to an in-depth exploration on the topic.

NATIONAL SURVEY
Young Scot devised a national survey (primarily for young people aged between 12 – 19 years old) in partnership with the Scottish Government Drugs Policy Unit. The survey was hosted online using Young Scot’s online consultation website, Young Scot Says Who? (http://www.youngscotsayswho.org) and promoted to our local authority Dialogue Youth Partnership and our other extensive networks.

Offline, the survey was promoted through the Young Scot Outreach Team who visited schools, youth groups, and attended a range of events for young people across the country. This was to ensure that young people who may have limited or no internet access had an opportunity to take part.

FOCUS GROUP AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
The Drugs Policy Unit were keen that some additional consultation was undertaken with two other specific groups of young people, due to the unique insight they would be able to provide. They wanted medical students (within the specified target age range) to be included as, not only are they young people, they are much more likely to have an increased knowledge of the medical affects of substance misuse due to their medical training. We conducted a focus group with six 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year medical students from the University of Edinburgh, who were recruited directly through the Medical School of the University.
In our original methodology, we planned to carry out a second smaller focus group with young people who were living in secure accommodation. This was organised directly with a secure unit in Renfrewshire who allowed us access to some of the residents, who are referred from a range of different agencies across Scotland. At the time of the session, only one girl (for a range of reasons) was able to attend so we had to change our methodology to accommodate this and we carried out a one-to-one interview rather than a focus group. However, we were able to gain from her unique insight and valuable experience.

LOCAL INVESTIGATION TEAMS (LITs)

The Local Investigation Team method develops informed participation by helping young people to organise themselves into teams to investigate and report on issues that are relevant to them and their peers. The young volunteers were recruited locally via an open process ensuring equality of representation and were given a small budget to help them facilitate the investigation.

The Teams had access to research resources within Young Scot, and were supported on a day to day basis by a local worker. They were tasked to carry out their own investigation on peer led approaches to substance misuse education at a local level, and to produce a set of findings and conclusions in a report. However, this report could be in a form of their choosing, and videos, presentations and a mural were created by the groups all of which were presented at the National Discussion Day.

In the initial proposal submitted to the Scottish Government six LITs were planned. However, shortly after that was agreed, Young Scot, supported by the Scottish Government, launched the Scottish Youth Commission on Alcohol to investigate Scotland’s relationship with alcohol. The year-long study was conducted by a group of 16 young people from across Scotland. The thorough investigation took evidence from health services, children’s service users, education specialists, academic researchers, medical consultants, police, alcohol industry, Facebook managers, MEPs and Members of Scottish Youth Parliament. The Commission presented their 38 recommendations for a positive change in Scotland’s relationship with alcohol to Minister for Public Health and Sport, Shona Robison MSP in March 2010. The role of peer education was a key area of investigation for the Youth Commission and it identified a need to collate evidence of the impact of peer education on young people’s attitudes and behaviours related to alcohol (on both the peer educators and those being educated). For the purposes of this consultation, an additional seventh LIT group was recruited to look specifically at an alcohol peer education project and the impact this had on the recipients of the peer education.
Recruitment

Young Scot worked with local authority partners via the Dialogue Youth Partnership Network and voluntary organisations to identify and recruit young people to participate in the LITs, with seven different teams recruited in total. We were keen to ensure that the groups of young people were recruited in relation to both geographic (urban and rural split) and thematic areas. Through discussions with the Drugs Policy Unit we identified seven key areas and themes to focus on. Two of the original LITs who became involved in the consultation at the start were unable to progress with the investigation, so two more were recruited to replace them. A summary of the final groups can be viewed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA / GROUP</th>
<th>Area / Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Dundee – Dundee Youth Voice</td>
<td>Urban / Thematic (Legal High)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Glasgow – Dalmarnock Futures Forum</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Aberdeen – Grade A (Get Real About Drugs Education Aberdeen)</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Alness – Alness Academy pupils (5th year)</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Dumfries &amp; Galloway – Youth Strategy Executive Group (YSEG)</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Y Sort It (West Dunbartonshire)</td>
<td>Thematic (hard to reach young people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 South Ayrshire – Prestwick Academy pupils (6th year pupils)</td>
<td>Thematic Recommendation of Youth Commission on Alcohol (YCA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NATIONAL DISCUSSION DAY

The results of the national survey and the conclusions of the LITs were brought together at a National Discussion Day, A Matter of Substance, held at Our Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh on 19th January 2011. This was a high-profile event, with an opening speech from the Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing MSP, at which the young people from all of the Teams, plus a wide range of invited guests, actively discussed all of the findings as well as beginning to examine the potential next steps on the topic.
Each LIT presented their local findings to the attended audience, and a specially invited ‘expert panel’ who were chosen due to their work and experience in this field. The panel were able to provide feedback and ask further questions to each LIT and also respond to questions from the LITs. The panel consisted of representatives from:

- Youth Commission on Alcohol (Youth Commissioner)
- Alcohol Policy Team, Scottish Government
- Drugs Policy Team, Scottish Government
- Scottish Peer Education Network
- Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA)

The event also allowed for ‘round table’ conversations to take place between all attendees to discuss the findings presented on the day, future action points for young people, local services and the Scottish Government, and also make recommendations for the Scottish Government to take forward.
FINDINGS
This section of the report details the consultation findings using the methods described above.

NATIONAL SURVEY
Young Scot devised a short survey, with input from the Scottish Government, to ask young people across Scotland their views on substance misuse education. A copy of the survey is available at Appendix A.

In total 1,052 young people completed the survey, using both online and offline methods. Not every question was completed by every respondent so the percentage of the total number of respondents is provided for each question.

Out of the respondents 1,006 replied - 62.8% were female and 36.2% were male – 1% declined to answer.

The age range of the respondents is shown below:

The survey was for young people aged 11 to 19 years old, but as many of the surveys were completed online there were responses from out with that age group. However, the majority were completed by those with in the desired age range.
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

There were responses (978 answered) from 24 of the 32 local authorities with in Scotland

Question 1 (1,041 answered)

What would you like to know more about in relation to drugs?

Different kinds of drugs
Cost to society of drugs misuse e.g. crime, violence
Health impacts of drugs
Other, please specify
The responses to the ‘other’ category can be viewed below:

The responses to this question indicate that what young people who responded to the survey really want to know about drugs is *what they do to you (how they make you feel)* (41.3%), closely followed by information on the *health impacts of drugs* (38.1%).
**Question 2** (1,025 answered)

Where do you currently get most of your information on drugs from? (Please tick all that apply)

The responses to the ‘other’ category can be viewed below:

* Websites (Google, Wikipedia, BBC)
The responses to ‘other’ category can be seen below:

It is very clear that the majority of respondents currently receive most of their information on drugs at school (75.8%). Friends (24%) and parents (19.5%) also played a role, whilst for the majority of the respondents specialist agencies were not often used. This highlights the key role that schools have in providing information on drugs to their pupils.

In terms of web based sources of information, ‘Frank’ (national drugs information website) was the website with the most number of individual mentions (15 in total) while websites in general got 19 responses (those specifically mentioned were Google, Wikipedia, BBC). Other websites that were identified by the respondents included Know the Score (national drugs information website), Young Scot (national youth information agency) and the NHS.
The majority of the respondents who received drugs education at school did so by teachers (72.1%) at the school, followed by the police and then youth worker. This shows that the majority do not receive their drugs education from outside agencies, but from teachers that they are already familiar with.
The responses to the ‘other’ category can be viewed below:

Many of the responses within this section are individual responses, although drugs specialist received the most individual responses (other than none and school).
**Question 4** (1,040 answered)

The responses to this question were fairly evenly distributed. However, *different kinds of drugs* received the highest number of responses (65.5%).

The responses to the 'other' category can be viewed below:
Many of these were individual responses so it is not possible to make general statements about them. However, a couple of the answers could be gathered together under ‘what drugs do to you (how they make you feel)’ including ‘how long it lasts’ and ‘the effects of drugs on you and others’.

**Question 5  (1,044 answered)**
The responses to this question indicate that the respondents generally felt that they had been informed by the drugs education they receive at school. The majority (59.7%) claimed they ‘agreed’ with the statement, with a further 20.1% claiming to ‘strongly agree’ suggesting a positive response to the drugs education they currently receive or have received at school.

**Question 6** (1,012 answered)

What do you think are the best ways to learn about drugs? (Please tick all that apply)

- Listening to what your parents say about drugs: 32.7% (331)
- Listening to what your friends say about drugs: 12.4% (125)
- Trying it yourself and seeing what happens: 6.7% (68)
- From other young people: 22.3% (226)
- From specialist agencies: 21.6% (219)
- Online (please specify in other box below): 4.2% (43)
- Don't know: 3.5% (35)
This question looked at the ways in which young people thought the best way to learn about drugs was, as opposed to where they currently do learn about them (Question 2). The majority of respondents felt that learning in school from teachers (64.8%) was the best way to be taught about drugs. The second most popular response was ‘listening to what your parents say about drugs’ (32.7%).

The third most popular response was ‘from other young people’ (22.3%), closely followed by ‘specialist agencies’ (21.6%).

The responses to the ‘other’ category can be viewed below:

These responses show that getting this information from a drug user (someone who has experienced using drugs), the police and ‘Frank’ were also thought to be appropriate ways to receive drugs information by some of the respondents. These numbers are quite low so can’t be taken as a general consensus but do highlight other methods young people consider appropriate.
Question 7  (1,013 answered)

This question aimed to specifically differentiate between 'information' and 'advice'. Information is about getting appropriate knowledge and facts about a subject, while advice is more personal and helps to provide recommendations on an appropriate choice of action. Therefore, young people may well get their information and advice about drugs from different sources. Exactly 50% of those who responded claimed they would go to school for advice on drugs, closely followed by their parents (44.7%). Again this highlights the important role that both the school and parents have with regards to not only providing information (Question 2) but providing advice to young people on drugs. Although friends only received the third highest response with 20.7% it was the second highest answer for Question 2 with 24%. This shows that young people do go to their friends for information and advice on occasions.
Both the options for other young people (9.7%) and online (7.2%) were quite low for this answer (almost 17% combined). This is quite an interesting finding as young people tend to use technology and the internet especially, a lot, so this finding seems to be at odds with this.

The responses to the ‘other’ category can be viewed below:

These results indicate that websites were also considered to be somewhere to go for advice, with specific mentions of ‘Frank’ and ‘Know the Score’.
Question 8  (1,024 answered)

Have you heard of the term 'peer education' before?

Just over half of young people who responded to this question had heard of the term ‘Peer Education’ before but a large number (45.1%) had not. This may have some impact on how they view substance misuse education as a whole, as this suggests respondents were not familiar with peer education as a method of substance misuse education across Scotland. This lack of awareness may provide some explanation as to why in earlier questions respondents tended to say that they get most of their information from, and think the best way to learn is from, schools and parent’s rather other young people.
Question 9  (1,000 answered)

"Peer education is when young people educate other young people on a variety of issues." Do you think this would be a good way to learn about drugs information?

All respondents were then given an explanation of what the term ‘Peer Education’ is and asked whether or not they thought that it would be good way to learn about drugs. The vast majority (78.6%) thought that it would be a good way to learn about drugs, with only 21.4% believing that it wasn’t a good way to learn about them.
Conclusion of Survey Results

Overall, the results tell us that young people who responded to the survey currently get most of their information on drugs within schools and mostly from teachers, which shows how important their roles are within drugs education. It also tells us that within that setting young people felt they learnt most about different kind of drugs, drugs and the law and their impacts to health and what they wanted to find out most is how drugs make you feel (what they do to you). However, the overwhelming majority felt informed by the drugs education they received within the school setting.

The survey also suggests that the respondents thought that the best way to learn about drugs is in school and delivered by teachers, which is at odds with the LIT results discussed later in this report that advocate the use of peer education. However, almost half of those who took part in the survey had not heard of the term peer education before. When this was explained to them the vast majority thought it was a good way to learn about drugs.

Although the survey results suggests that the respondents felt teachers, and a school setting were the best way to learn about drugs education, parents also had an important role to play. In terms of the best way to learn about drugs and where they currently get most of their information, parents received the second most common response. This shows parents are currently playing a significant role in providing information and advice to their children.
FOCUS GROUP
The focus group took place with six students from the University of Edinburgh who were all studying Medicine. They were aged between 18 and 19 years old and were in either their first or second year of study. A copy of the focus group schedule is at Appendix B.

The purpose of the focus group was to find out what the students thought about the following issues:
- different substances
- when ‘use’ becomes substance misuse
- drugs information and advice
- if they considered drugs to be a problem in their community
- why young people in general take drugs
- peer education

Different Substances
When initially asked, the group came up with a list of different things that they considered to be a ‘substance’ including items that were legal to purchase (but age restricted) such as alcohol, tobacco, glue, solvents and illegal drugs like cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy. They did not consider prescription medication to be a substance, but did agree that it could be addictive and therefore had the potential to be misused.

Substance Misuse
The group differentiated between the use of legal and illegal substances. In terms of illegal substances, they felt that using a substance once constituted misuse as there was a good reason why it was illegal. For legal substances this was different as they regarded them to be anything that was addictive – e.g. alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. They gave the example that using Pro Plus tablets (that contains caffeine) on a regular basis could be considered misuse as it had addictive qualities.

Information and Advice on drugs
When asked where they would go for information and advice about drugs the first thing they all said was their friends as they were people they trusted. However, they said it also depended on what kind of information they were looking for and sources of information suggested included: someone in recovery, online sources, help lines or family members.
They thought someone who had previously used substances (someone in recovery) had a role to play in providing appropriate advice as their experiences would provide a realistic account.

The group also spoke about the use of online information and advice services, specifically different NHS sites, and the role that the media has in marketing and publicising relevant services. The group listened to the radio regularly and commented that there were often advertisements on it publicising such services. They also mentioned telephone advice lines such as Frank (national helpline and website providing information about drugs and their affects to young people) or Nightline (general information and advice line run by students for students across the UK) and said there was a lot of advertising of those services throughout the University.

However, when asked where they would turn to for advice if they were concerned about a friend who they felt was misusing substances the group all agreed that they would talk to someone older such as a parent or an older sibling.

All of the participants felt that there needed to be better information about drugs as they struggled to think of many definitive sources of information. In relation to the drugs information they received at school most felt that it was not adequate and was based on a ‘just say no policy’ rather than providing real information such as what harm drug taking can cause. The general consensus was that there was an unequal balance between the education they received about illegal drugs (very little) and the education they received about alcohol and smoking (a lot). However, one participant (who did not attend school in Scotland) stated that she had received drugs education through her youth club where people who were in recovery came to the club to discuss their experiences of drugs. She considered that to be much more effective than other forms of education she had received as they were viewed as “experts” and therefore more credible.

Drugs and their community

Only four of the participants were from Scotland but all were currently living in Edinburgh due to their studies. In terms of their University community they all felt that cannabis was a problem among the general student population, and claimed that there was often a strong smell of it in their halls of residence.

The four participants from Scotland were from Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Islands. Those from the three larger cities all felt that there were drug problems in their cities but not necessarily where
they actually lived in their local community. However, it was more apparent when going into the city centres or particular housing estates that had a reputation for drug problems. The participant who grew up in the Islands stated that although it was a rural setting drugs, especially cannabis and cocaine, were readily available and easy to access.

**Young people and drugs**

When asked why they thought that some young people took drugs the first answer discussed was peer pressure. They believed that young people would start taking drugs to be part of a group to fit in and then it would just become a regular activity, a normal way of life. They also felt that, for some young people, taking drugs was normal due to their family/local environment. If everyone around them was taking drugs then that behaviour became normalised and more socially acceptable, so it was less likely to be considered something that should not be done.

They also thought that taking drugs could be seen as an escape or as a relief by young people who were going through particularly bad times in their life e.g. problems with their family or their home environment. As previously mentioned they associated areas with high levels of deprivation with high drug use and felt that many people living in those areas would start to take drugs as a way to escape their reality.

The participants also thought that young people were naturally curious to experience different things so may try drugs for the first time out of curiosity, to see what it was like. Any continuation of drug taking could then be due to their subsequent addiction.
At this point the group also discussed the role and influence of the media. They specifically mentioned TV programmes such as Skins and the In-Betweeners which they felt normalised and ratified teenage drug use. They thought that drug use was being portrayed in a way that young people would find appealing.

Peer Education

Some of the group had experience of ‘peer education’ but not in the field of drugs education. Their experience related to providing information to first year students at university on issues such as leaving home and becoming independent. They felt that they could help in a way that lecturers and other staff could not as they had recently gone through the same experience and was something they could share with others.

Although one participant had received drugs education at their youth club from people in recovery, none had experienced peer education at school. When asked, they all felt that peer education would be a good way to learn about drugs in school but only if the peer educators took it seriously and received proper training. They felt it was very important to be able to provide accurate and up to date information so there should be a lot of emphasis on training for the peer educators.

They also felt that a good ‘peer educator’ would, in addition to receiving appropriate training, need to be someone that the other young people respected. Otherwise, they would not be taken seriously.

Although the group were positive about peer education they did feel that, no matter how some young people receive drugs education, the ‘educator’ is not going to be with them when they are confronted with making that real choice of taking or not taking drugs.

In terms of making recommendations to be taken forward in relation to peer led approaches to substance misuse education the participants agreed that:

- peer education would be an appropriate and beneficial way to educate young people on substance misuse
- being educated on the topic by people who had experienced substance misuse themselves would be a very effective way to educate young people as they are viewed as credible
- any form of drugs education should highlight just how accessible drugs are and how ‘real’ the problem is across Scotland (numbers of people affected, how drugs can harm the body etc...)
- Drugs education should start in primary school so more in-depth education in secondary school is simply viewed as an extension of prior learning.
- Impacts of substance misuse should be considered on a holistic level, to include social problems as well as the more obvious health and well-being issues.
- The key to stopping young people from taking drugs is to build their confidence and make them happy and secure within themselves.

**Education should not be a 'chemistry lesson'**

![Image of a cartoon lab scene with a group of students and a teacher discussing drugs]

**So the chemical compound or cannabis is an equation of . . .**

**BORING! I’d like to hear REAL experience from REAL people**

graham@ogilviedesign.co.uk
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Although the original intention was to carry out another focus group with residents from a Secure Residential Unit, on the day it was only possible for one young person (female) to attend. For this reason, the session became a one-to-one interview around some of the topic areas outlined in the focus group topic guide (see Appendix C).

Although the information collected is only from one young person and should not be taken as representative of residents of secure accommodation, it nonetheless provides us with a useful insight into her thoughts and experiences of substance misuse and peer education.

**Different substances**
The participant listed a range of different items that she considered to be a substance:

- Ecstasy
- Cannabis
- LSD
- Amphetamine
- Heroin
- Valium
- Alcohol
- Jellies
- Cocaine
- Poppers
- Glue
- Aerosols
- Caffeine
- Cigarettes

She was unfamiliar with the term ‘substance misuse’ but when given an explanation felt that it was a real problem where she grew up.

**Drugs information**
The participant stated that she would get information on drugs by speaking to friends who had experience of taking drugs, teachers at school, and her parents. However, she felt that she got the most useful information on drugs from “hanging about, just growing up”. She described seeing many people around her when she was growing up taking drugs and the negative affect that had on their lives. She said that the bad experiences of others had put her off and she felt that she had learnt from other peoples mistakes.
Peer education

Although the participant had not heard the term ‘peer education’ before, once it was explained she felt that it would be a very effective way to receive substance misuse education. She had experience of peer education within the Unit but in relation to crime. A young woman who had previously been involved in crime came into the Unit to speak to the residents about her life in an attempt to stop them re-offending, and spoke about how her life had changed in a positive way after she stopped being involved in crime. For the participant this was a much more effective way to get the message across as it was believable and credible.
LOCAL INVESTIGATION TEAMS (LITs)

The LITs were tasked to look at the topic of peer led approaches to substance misuse education in their area to provide a local perspective. Six of the teams investigated approaches to drugs education and one was focused on a peer education project on alcohol that had been running in South Ayrshire and so had a slightly different remit.

The teams looking at drugs specifically were asked to consider some of the following questions during their investigation:

- What does ‘substance misuse’ mean?
- What kind of substances should be viewed as ‘a substance’?
- Where would you go to for advice on drugs and why?
- Are drugs a problem where you live? What are those problems?
- Why do you think some young people take drugs?
- What would you do if a friend had a problem with drugs?
- What would you like to be able to if a friend had a problem with drugs?
- What is the role of young people in tackling substance misuse?
- How can you best be supported in doing this?
- Are there good examples / best practice in your area? What are they? Why do they work?

Details on the work of the LITs and their key findings are provided below.
DALMARNOCK FUTURES FORUM (GLASGOW)

Dalmarnock Futures Forum is a group of youth peer mentors based in the east end of Glasgow. They are all local young people who have first-hand experience of family or friends living with alcohol or drugs and have an insight into the consequences of that behaviour.

As an area, Dalmarnock suffers from a negative image due to poor housing, drug and alcohol problems, territorialism and low educational attainment levels amongst the community. The aim of the Dalmarnock Futures Forum is to challenge and address drug and alcohol misuse amongst young people in the area, and for the peer mentors to build positive relationships and trust within the community. They offer the young people the support that they might not receive at home and take a non-judgemental approach to offer support and advice where necessary to young people.

Their investigation involved speaking to young people who attended their drop-in sessions and also eight semi-structured interviews which were made into three video case studies.

Drugs and their area:

The members of the LIT and those they spoke to felt that drugs was a very real and dangerous problem in their area, and not only that, it is a problem that is very obvious. They found that drugs were easily and readily available to anyone who wanted them, and that drug dealers do not care how young the people are that they sell them to. Therefore, if a young person in the area wants to take drugs they can do so easily.

The LIT thought that because there was a high prevalence of drugs in the area it was not setting a good example to the younger generation, who admitted looking up to older people in their community and often copying their behaviours. If these people were taking drugs then it was seen as something “cool” to do.

Their findings suggested a feeling amongst the young people interviewed that more police were needed in the area to control the drugs problem but that currently police control was almost non-existent. However, within one of the case studies it became clear that the young person involved felt that the police had “lost the battle in the area”. There was a belief police were concentrated more on other parts of the city where change was viewed as more of a possibility.
Young people and drugs:
The results of their investigation suggest that peer pressure is considered to be the main reason that young people start taking drugs, closely followed by how normal drug taking was considered within their community. One participant described it as normal as “buying your messages”. As there are high levels of drugs use within the community as a whole, they felt that young people in the area did not always regard drug taking a big issue and felt that this was often the case within other deprived communities.

They also felt that there was a lack of awareness of the dangers of drugs and that many young people took them without knowing what those dangers were. However, they also thought that even if young people were aware of the dangers, they did not necessarily think that it would affect them in the same way.

The investigation also found out that young people in the area took drugs because of boredom and a lack of activities, education and opportunities. A lot of the time young people started taking drugs after drinking alcohol so felt that there was a link between young people drinking and then moving onto drugs. They also felt that young people are naturally curious about trying new things and experimenting and did not necessarily consider drug taking to be a big issue.

Dalmarnock Futures Forum Recommendations:
This group did not come up with specific recommendations to take forward, but within their findings identified the need for:

- More positive role models within the community (such as the Peer Mentors) as the young people stated that drug taking was often a copied behaviour, so it would be beneficial to have more peers setting a good example to other young people
- Increased educational and other opportunities in the area, as it was felt that boredom and lack of opportunities was part of the drugs problem in Dalmarnock
- Additional policing of the area in order to help combat the problem
- Greater information on the risks and health impacts of drugs
DUNDEE YOUTH VOICE - PLASMASCREEN

This LIT was made up of members of Dundee Youth Voice, who support Dundee’s MSYPs (Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament). Their investigation used focus groups (36 young people in total) to gather the views of other members of Dundee Youth Voice, the Dundee Youth Council working group and the City Wide Pupil Council group. They focused on the 12 – 20 age group with representation from almost every area of the city.

Dundee area:

Their investigation found that Dundee has a troubled relationship with drugs and substances in general, which spans decades. The LIT claimed that 30 – 40% of heart attacks in Dundonians who are less than 40 years of age are cocaine related, and the LIT felt this highlighted the seriousness of the problem.

Through their investigation they also found out from respondents that Dundee has a perceived problem with ‘legal highs’ in particular, with some high profile incidences in the media and a feeling that something has to change in the city to prevent the situation from getting worse.

Substance Misuse definition:

The group discovered that young people had varying ideas on the definition of ‘substance misuse’ and that there was no single, universal definition so people have their own perceptions of what the problem actually is.

Information and advice services:

Participants were aware of some substance misuse information and advice services (and felt comfortable approaching them for help), but the services they knew about only formed a small part of those that were available. They felt that on the whole, the overall awareness of advice and support services was quite poor.

Peer Education:

All of the young people who took part in the investigation thought that peer education would be a good way to learn and also something they would be interested in getting involved in. However, they did state it was vital to ensure that those young people in the role of peer educators had adequate training and resources in order to be effective and to ensure the right information is provided to young people.
They felt it was important to improve on and make the best use of the resources that are already available. They also thought that the education system as a whole had a key role to play as one of a range of solutions to the general lack of awareness and information on the issue that young people have, and could help to fill the gap they feel currently exists.

**Dundee Youth Voice LIT concluded:**

- There is a prevalence of myths and misleading information which are shaping the attitudes of young people towards substances
- Legal highs are easier to obtain than other substances and have quickly become a social norm in Dundee
- There is a lack of awareness of many support services available to young people, with only a number heavily publicised
- Education has a strong role to play in ensuring that young people have, from a young age, a good understanding and awareness of the issues, problems, services and solutions to substance misuse and that this must be valued and be central to education in schools – not just an added extra
- The delivery of this education should have a meaningful element of peer led involvement

**Dundee Youth Voice LIT Recommendations:**

- Increased awareness of all support services, including Cool2Talk which was mentioned by many of the young people who took part in the investigation
- Services to provide accurate and up to date information
- A more defined curriculum within Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- Substance misuse and drugs education needs to play a bigger role within the PSE curriculum and address the current imbalance between information on sexual health and other matters versus drugs
- Information provided within PSE should be more detailed and up to date
- Change the teaching methods when providing substance misuse education within PSE by using young people to act as peer mentors, especially those who have previous experience of substance misuse in order to have a useful impact on thoughts and attitudes
YOUTH STRATEGY EXECUTIVE GROUP (DUMFRIES)
This LIT comprised of six young people from the Youth Strategy Executive Group (YSEG) within Dumfries and Galloway Council. Their investigation consisted of face to face consultation surveying 81 young people and adults within the town, and also seven professionals who worked in the field. These included a youth worker, public health manager and worker, occupational therapist and nutritionist.

Information gathered from young people:
Almost half of the young people consulted said they or someone they knew had been affected by drugs, and the same number also thought that Dumfries had a drug problem. The main issues identified around the drug problem related to the availability of drugs and the prevalence of drug dealers. Although not specific to their area, they thought that the main problems that could occur from substance and alcohol misuse were violence, stealing, health issues and prostitution.

When asked about why they thought young people took drugs peer pressure, boredom, depression and the desire to be cool were the main factors associated with it.

Over half of the young people interviewed said that they were unaware of any support services that were available to young people with drug problems but those that did specifically mentioned FRANK, GP surgeries, Turning Point, Apex, and Alcohol and Drug Partnerships.

When asked what, if any, role young people should have in helping to tackle substance misuse problems in their area the majority consulted felt that young people trained as peer educators would be the best way forward. They also felt that using people in recovery would provide an element of realism to the information which was important in order to be effective. Additionally, they thought that drugs education should include the use of shock tactics on the effects of drugs.

They also found out that those consulted felt that there should be more activities and things for young people to do in order to alleviate the boredom that could cause them to take drugs.
Information gathered from professionals:
Like the young people who took part in the local investigation, many of the professionals knew someone who had been affected by drugs and felt that it was a problem in their local area. They also felt that young people were likely to take drugs due to peer pressure, boredom (lack of activities available), but also attributed it to curiosity/experimentation and exposure to drugs in the family environment.

When asked how young people could be involved in tackling substance misuse, their response was to be involved in community initiatives with a positive focus, being at the forefront of drugs education and being part of a young people’s advisory forum.

Youth Strategy Executive Group LIT’s Recommendations:
- Training for young people to become Peer Educators
- More appropriate and hard-hitting information and education on substance misuse and its effects
- Increased knowledge and signposting of support and information networks available to young people
- Young people to be encouraged to be more involved in community initiatives
- More activities and things to do being more available/accessible for young people
Y SORT IT (CLYDEBANK, WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE)

This Local Investigation Team was made up of seven young people who access Y Sort It, which is a young people’s health information service. For their investigation the team surveyed 375 young people in the area, and interviewed 19 young people and professionals. The organisations that took part in the interviews were Dumbarton Area Council for Alcohol, Scottish Ambulance Service, West Dunbartonshire Council Community Learning and Development, Clydebank High School, Strathclyde Police, All 4 Youth project, Streetlinks youth project, Tulbachan Trust and Y Sort It.

Drugs and their area:

The localised survey results showed that 20% of respondents rated the level of substance misuse as extremely or very serious in the area, while 42% thought it was serious enough.

All of those interviewed felt substance misuse was a real problem in the area, with one local organisation working with young people seeing the impact of drugs and alcohol through the high number of referrals across West Dunbartonshire.

Over 50% of young people surveyed related substance misuse to anti-social behaviour and gang fighting, while 77% felt that hanging around the streets doing nothing was when young people were most likely to try drugs or alcohol.

Substance Misuse:

In the survey respondents rated alcohol, cannabis and tobacco as the most commonly used substance but also the least harmful. Cocaine and ecstasy were the second most commonly used drugs, and heroin, ecstasy and cocaine were rated the most dangerous and harmful.

These drugs were also spoken about in the interviews; with one professional stating young people often start using alcohol and cannabis but then move onto other things.

Young people and drugs:

The local survey found that 93% of respondents agreed peer pressure from friends caused young people to take drugs or alcohol – this was the biggest single cause attributed to drug taking in young people. In addition, 80% agreed that the following were reasons young people take drugs and alcohol:

- It would make them feel cool
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

- To improve their image
- Was fun and exciting
- If they were stressed or depressed
- If they were bored
- Just want to experiment

Further reasons identified by the professionals interviewed included how easy drugs were to get and the low cost of many of them; young people not always understanding the long-term effects and consequences of drugs before taking them, and that their upbringing and environment might make it seem normal.

The survey findings also linked drug taking with alcohol consumption - 80% of respondents stated that they would be more likely to try drugs for the first time if they had been drinking.

Support:
58% of those surveyed knew where they could go if they needed support in relation to drugs, while 42% did not know. Out of those who did know where they could go, Y Sort It was the service that most had heard of and felt they could approach.

Peer led approaches:
Over 50% of the survey respondents felt peer education was a good method for young people to learn about substance misuse, the main reasons being that they felt the issue was easier to discuss with peers, they felt better understood by them and also listened more.

Those young people interviewed also felt that young people would have a better understanding of what young people go through, especially someone who had used drugs before.

Peer education and peer mentors were also supported by teaching staff from the local high school taking part in the consultation, who thought that young people respond better to people nearer their own age because they understand the pressures (or perceived pressures) that they are under.

There was also the view that there is a clear need to ensure all peer educators are trained appropriately and understand what it is they are delivering, and know how to work with local agencies. This ensures that the young people, as a result of peer education, know where to find any appropriate support.
Within in the survey, police, youth workers and GPs were regarded as the most popular choices to train the peer educators.

Y Sort It LIT’s Recommendations:
The young people interviewed were asked what they thought would help to reduce drug and alcohol misuse in the community and made the following recommendations:

- More activities for young people to be involved in, more youth clubs and places to go to – important this also covers rural areas due to transport and territorial issues
- Get young people directly involved in the education of other young people
- Within substance misuse education involve people who have experienced drug problems themselves but who have changed and turned their life around – setting a good example so young people can really learn from them
- Within substance misuse education, pay special attention to the dangers of different substances, their long term affects and the wider social problems associated with them
ALNESS (HIGHLAND)

This LIT was a group of fifth year pupils at Alness Academy. Their investigation involved surveying 120 young people within the community, and interviewing local workers (police and substance misuse worker) and a recovering drug user.

The group wanted to highlight that small rural communities are also affected by substance misuse, not just larger towns. As residents, they felt on the surface Alness is very pretty but when you look deeper there is an obvious drug problem so the feeling of the group was that looks can be very deceiving.

They stated that drug dealers often target young people making drugs easily accessible to them, and that many young people were unaware of the dangers and risks associated with drugs.

The LIT carried out a survey in their local area and the results showed that of those who participated:

- 66% thought their community had a drug problem
- 45% had been offered drugs before (mainly at parties and festivals)
- 88% think it is not OK to take drugs
- 91% would prefer drugs education to be led by their peers as opposed to having adults teaching them

Alness LIT’s Recommendations:

Although the group did not make any specific recommendations, the survey results identified a desire by the young people to receive drugs education by their peers. The group have subsequently started to look into how they could start a peer education project within their school.
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

ABERDEEN – GRADE A

This LIT was made up of members from the youth council, which is the official voice for young people within community planning in Aberdeen City Council. The group had already come together with the aim of setting up a peer education project in response to the drug issues in the city, and this piece of work was the first step in that process.

They team created a survey and consulted with 183 young people in eight secondary schools and one college in the city; they also produced a video containing interviews with professionals working within the field. Organisations who took part were Drugs Action, Aberdeen City Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Aberdeen City Council.

The results of their survey show:

- Vast majority of respondents felt that ‘drugs misuse’ meant the improper use or abuse of drugs
- The overwhelming majority did not think that all drug use should be considered as ‘misuse’
- Most of the respondents thought that the kind of substances that should be viewed as a drug were those that were ‘illegal’
- Most of the respondents got their information on drugs in school (which included PSE and guidance classes), the second highest response was the media (internet, posters, leaflets, TV adverts) and the third highest response was healthcare professionals
- The top answers for where young people would go to for advice were health professionals, school (PSE, teachers), parents/family/friends and specialist services including ChildLine
- When asked if drugs were a problem where you lived, the vast majority said no
- The main reasons given for young people taking drugs were to look cool, peer pressure, for the ‘buzz’ and as a form of escapism
- The vast majority stated that they would help/support/advise a friend who had a drug problem
- Most felt that any drugs problems that existed could be solved
- The majority thought that the prohibition of drugs doesn’t actually work
Grade A LIT’s Recommendations:
From the survey results the team discussed the findings and have made the following recommendations:

- Government policy should take into account young people’s opinions through a formal process of consultation
- Develop new and balanced systems which recognise that young people take risks; including experimenting with drugs and alcohol – a system that includes elements of education and control in a non-punitive way
- Support a programme of peer education projects (like Grade A) which allows young people to explore their opinions and feelings without pressure and without fear of what educators/adults might say or do
PRESTWICK ACADEMY (ALCOHOL PEER EDUCATION PROJECT)

This LIT was made up of sixth year pupils at Prestwick Academy; they were tasked to look specifically at an alcohol peer education project and find out the experiences of the young people who took part. Prestwick Academy ran an alcohol peer education project which the pupils chose to investigate. The project ran in 2010 and involved a group of 6th year pupils, who had received training to be peer educators, educating groups of 1st year pupils in a series of lessons at school.

The LIT ran a series of focus groups with around 40 young people who received the peer education and also interviewed seven of the peer educators themselves.

Their investigation found out that the young people who received the peer education felt that it was a better way to be taught. This was because they felt that their peers could relate to them more than their teachers could. They also felt that being educated by their peers meant it was a much more enjoyable way to learn. They all indicated an increase in knowledge from before to after the alcohol programme.

In terms of what they felt worked well, focus group participants thought that active learning and interactive sessions were the most appropriate. They had particularly enjoyed using beer goggles and felt it was better than just being told what to do. This resource simulates the effects of being drunk such as reduced reaction time, visual distortion etc... so that the wearer of the goggles experiences similar effects to alcohol on their body.

They also thought it was important not to be over loaded with too much factual information. Within the sessions there was often a competitive nature which they enjoyed. They felt it was really important that the peer educators connected well with them and were approachable. This helped to improve the overall learning of the pupils.

The young people did feel that there could have been more time spent on active learning within their sessions.

The peer educators said that the pupils became very passionate and involved in the sessions they ran, and also felt that starting with first year pupils was the right age to begin the sessions. They thought pupils starting secondary school are presented with different pressures from primary school so it was important to act on this.
Prestwick Academy LIT's Recommendations:
Although the LIT did not make specific recommendations on peer education, the pupils involved in the peer education project all indicated that being taught by other young people just a few years older than them was a better way to learn, and that their knowledge of alcohol issues increased from before to after the programme.
Local Investigation Team Conclusion

Although each of the seven Local Investigation Teams carried out their own pieces of work differently, there were some common themes that ran throughout the findings.

First of all, there was a really positive response from all the LITs to using peer education as way of educating young people on substance misuse. The main reason identified for this was because peer educators were much closer in age which in turn gave them a higher level of credibility and meant that they were not ‘out of touch’ with young people. However, a clear need was identified for appropriate training for the peer educators and providing the right information was very important. Additionally, the timing of when this information should be presented was considered to be important as the pressures and influences of young people changed from primary to secondary school.

The role that schools play with delivering substance misuse education was highlighted through the LIT investigations. There was a view that it should be delivered with a meaningful element of peer led involvement, and that it should have a bigger role within Personal and Social Education (PSE) using peer mentors.

Information gathered through the Local Investigation Teams suggests that peer education is viewed as a popular way to educate young people on drugs and substance misuse. However, in the national survey there was a low percentage (9.7%) of respondents who said they would speak to other young people for advice on drugs contrasting the LIT findings. However, it is worth noting that as 20.7% said they would speak to their friends it is perhaps the idea of speaking to other young people that they are not as familiar with.

From the LIT findings it was clear that many of the young people who took part in the different investigations felt there is not only a lack of information on drugs, but also where to go for that information and advice and some also raised the issue of awareness of support services.

In terms of the wider issue of substance misuse education, involving people who had experience of substance misuse themselves but were in recovery was regarded as a good way to educate young people. Again this related to their credibility as their stories and information were ‘real’ rather than examples or hearsay. Having that element of realism was considered important.
The LITs found a number of different reasons why young people take drugs. The most common responses were boredom and peer pressure. They also highlighted the need for more diversionary activities in certain areas. As well as sometimes feeling pressured into taking drugs, there was also the element of copied behaviour and doing what other ‘older and cooler’ people around them were doing. If the people around them, especially those they look up to, are behaving in that way (taking drugs) then they will copy what they do to present the same image. Many of the LITs discovered that the young people they engaged with their local area felt drugs were readily available to young people where they lived, so this was also considered a reason for them taking them.

There was also a belief expressed in some of the LIT findings that in areas of high deprivation drug taking was often considered normalised behaviour so not such a big deal. Again, if everyone around them is taking drugs it is not thought of as such a bad thing and is not going against the social norms of that area.
NATIONAL DISCUSSION DAY – A MATTER OF SUBSTANCE

On January 19th 2011, the Local Investigation Teams came together to present their findings to their peers and a range of experts and professionals at Our Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh. The event was hosted by Louise Macdonald, Chief Executive of Young Scot and Kyle Thornton. Kyle is a 5th year pupil at Bellahouston Academy and is also a member of the Young Scot/NHS Health Scotland Young People’s Health Panel which is a group of young people who advise Young Scot on all the work we do around health and well-being for young people.

The theme of the day was ‘The Cube’, and throughout the day lots of different people – policy experts, young people – were asked to “Enter The Cube” by going on stage and giving their perspectives on substance misuse education.

A conference artist was in attendance to capture all of the ideas, themes and issues discussed and translate them into illustrations. These were drawn ‘live’ on the day, and will be turned into digital art and distributed to all of the LITs.

Live tweeting took place during the day to share discussions and key points with people who were unable to attend, so they were able to follow what happened on Twitter. The national survey results were also presented for the first time, and all attendees were asked to predict what they thought the national results would be.

Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety gave an opening speech and set the scene for the event. He highlighted that around 55,000 people in Scotland have serious drug problems that costs Scotland millions of pounds a year. The prevention arm of the National Drug’s Strategy the Road to Recovery recognises that preventing drug use is preferable to treating drug problems and the Scottish Government asked Young Scot to carry out this project in order to find out more about how young people would like to be taught about substance misuse.

An expert panel was invited to take part in the day. Representatives on the panel were:

- Rohanna Law, Development Officer, Scottish Peer Education Network
- Siobhan Mackay, Alcohol Policy Team, Scottish Government
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

- Elaine Macleans, Police Constable, Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency
- Nicole Rougvie, Youth Commissioner, Scottish Youth Commission on Alcohol
- John Somers, Drugs Policy Team, Scottish Government

The panel listened and responded to the presentations from all LITs, and answered questions posed by members of the teams.

Panel Question & Answer Session
The questions asked by the LITs are listed below, with some of the panel’s comments & responses provided.

The Dalmarnock LIT asked the panel “How do you see peer-education being sustained?”
Panel responses included:
- Enthusiasm
- Good ideas
- Keep it relevant
- Sharing good practice
- Good training for supporters of peer educators
- Training new peer educators
- Events like today – Scottish Government will disseminate the findings across other Scottish Government departments

The Y Sort It LIT asked “There is a lot of evidence to support peer education but who will fund peer-education training programmes?”

- Training programmes can sign up to voluntary sector newsletters to get information on sources of funding they can apply for
- Projects need to provide good evidence of the impact of their peer education project so that organisations will fund the project
- Old-school fundraising
- Make use of free training from Scottish Peer Education Network, Youth Scotland and Fast Forward

We don’t need heaps of funding to promote ourselves
We can also do things old school!
The Alness LIT asked “Why so soft on drug offences?”

- Difficult to comment - need to look at underlying reasons for young people’s drugs use and tackle these first
- If someone is caught in possession, they will be stopped and searched by police then the whole picture is looked at and dealt with

The Prestwick Academy LIT asked “will the recession make alcohol problems worse?”

- No evidence to suggest this
- Lack of money may lead to less consumption or people might consume more for comfort
- Policy teams need to work together

The Aberdeen LIT asked “If someone gets caught with drugs, young people will implicate others involved to help get off the charge”

- This doesn’t happen – police use intelligence from initiatives like crime stoppers etc
The Dumfries & Galloway LIT asked “are there any places that do not have a drug problem?”

- Some places may think they don’t have a drug problem – what is a drug problem?
- Need to look internationally at other countries experiences and share good practice

How successful have initiatives been to help get drugs off the street?

- £22million of assets seized
- Education critical to tackle demand not just supply - make sure information is consistently good.
- Part of role of police is prevention, not just enforcement
- Start education in nursery

**Table Discussions and Action Points**

In the afternoon, discussions at each table looked at potential action points that can be taken forward in relation to peer led approaches to substance misuse education. This was talked about for young people, local services and the Scottish Government. In terms of young people there was a recognition to support education on this, but also to realise that there is an element of choice and it is about providing relevant and factual information so that they can go on to make an informed choice.

The role of school, including teachers, was considered very important but equally it was necessary to think beyond that for those who do not attend school. The use of peer education in schools was a positive way to educate young people, with senior pupils working with S1 – S3 pupils.

As well as information for young people on their own experiences, those taking part in the discussions thought young people should be involved in writing a guide on what to do if a family member or friend becomes involved in drugs.

In terms of local services, they felt that it was vital to link education work in schools with local organisations to develop a consistent approach to substance misuse education. The idea of hosting local events on the topic involving all of the relevant stakeholders was also put forward as a suggestion.
It was considered important to ensure that a consistent approach to substance misuse education is implemented across Scotland, so that work carried out as a more local level (through youth work and voluntary organisations) compliments the approach set out in the Curriculum for Excellence, and vice versa. It was felt that the Scottish Government should take this forward, as well as enabling the continued debate with young people on the issue to take their views on board.

All of the attendees had the opportunity to post their comments on the day in ‘blabber boxes’, some of which included recommendations which are summarised into themes below (all evaluation comments can be viewed as Appendix D).

- Need to increase the amount of hours spent on substance misuse education in Personal Social Education classes
- Need more national direction to support the Curriculum for Excellence
- Have permanent peer education projects in schools
- Ensure there is adequate funding for young people’s services as they are an important way to keep young people away from substances

Louise Macdonald drew the day to a close by thanking all of the young people for their hard work and contribution to the event, the expert panel for their involvement and everyone else for participating on the day.
COMMENTARY AND NEXT STEPS

During the course of this consultation the young people involved have shown that they support the use of peer led approaches to substance misuse education, although almost half of the survey respondents were not aware of it. However, once it was explained the vast majority thought that it was a good way to learn about drugs information.

This report highlights the enthusiasm and awareness amongst young people of the issues raised in the investigation while also outlining a potential need for more peer led approaches to substance misuse education as a better way to learn. As peer educators are close in age to those receiving the education this was believed to give them a higher level of credibility but they also identified the need for appropriate training for peer educators.

The survey identified that young people wanted to know what drugs do you (how they make you feel). Whilst the LITs found that there was a lack of information about drugs for young people, those who completed the survey felt informed by the information they received at school.

School was identified as playing a significant role in substance misuse education. Within the survey most of the young people got their information within schools, although parents did have an important role in this too. The LITs also highlighted the importance of schools, especially how substance misuse education links to the Curriculum for Excellence on a national level. This was also echoed during the National Discussion Day, and also linked to local services to meet the needs of young people not in school. As well as peer led approaches to substance misuse, the LITs found that the idea of working with former drug users and discussing their experiences was perceived as an effective way to educate young people as their ‘real’ stories gave them a high level of credibility. This credibility of the educators, including peer educators, was considered very important.

Findings from this consultation will add to the current evidence base on substance misuse education in Scotland. It will enable the Scottish Government’s Drug Policy Unit and other relevant policy areas in local and national government, to consider young people’s views when looking at how substance misuse education can be delivered. The findings and recommendations from the LIT reports and the from the national survey will play an important role in informing the Scottish Government’s future thinking around the provision of substance misuse education in Scotland.
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Appendix A – Survey Questions

PEER LED APPROACHES TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE EDUCATION

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK AND WIN £50 ITUNES VOUCHERS!

Young Scot has teamed up with the Scottish Government to put together this survey, to ask young people across Scotland what they think about substance misuse education. So please let us know what you think…

1. What would you like to know more about in relation to drugs?
   - Different kinds of drugs
   - Health impacts of drugs
   - What drugs do to you (how they make you feel)
   - Cost to society of drugs misuse, e.g. crime, violence
   - Other, please specify

2. Where do you currently get most of your information on drugs from? (Please tick all that apply)
   - School
   - Youth Group
   - Parents
   - Friends
   - Other young people
   - Specialist Agencies, e.g. Crew 2000, Fast Forward
   - On-line, please specify
   - Other, please specify

3. If you received drugs education at school: Who delivered it?
   - Teacher
   - Youth Worker
   - Police
   - Other, please specify

What did you learn about?
   - Different kinds of drugs
   - Health impacts of drugs
   - Drugs and the law
   - Other, please specify
“I feel informed by the drugs education I received at school.”
How much do you agree with this statement?

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree  ☐ Don’t know

4. What do you think are the best ways to learn about drugs? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Listening to what your parents say about drugs  ☐ Listening to what your friends say about drugs

☐ In school from teachers  ☐ Trying it yourself and seeing what happens

☐ From other young people  ☐ From specialist agencies

☐ Don’t know  ☐ On-line, please specify

☐ Other, please specify ____________________________

5. Where would you go to for advice on drugs? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ School  ☐ Youth Group

☐ Parents  ☐ Friends

☐ Other young people  ☐ Specialist Agencies

☐ On-line, please specify ____________________________  ☐ Other, please specify

6. Have you heard of the term ‘peer education’ before?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

“Peer Education is when young people educate other young people on a variety of issues.”

Do you think this would be a good way to learn about drugs information?

☐ Yes  ☐ No
ABOUT YOU:
Are you:  □ Male  □ Female  □ No answer

What age are you?  

Where do you live? (Local Authority area)  

Which of the following describes what you’re up to at the moment? (Please tick all that apply)

□ At school  □ At college  □ At university
□ In work-based training  □ Employed Full Time  □ Employed P/T
□ Unemployed  □ Full Time Volunteer  □ Other

If you wish to enter the free prize draw to win £50 of iTunes vouchers please include your details below:

Name  

Email Address  

Phone Number
### Appendix B – Medical Students Focus Group Schedule

**Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education**  
**Medical Students at Edinburgh University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Young Scot</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Background to consultation</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consent</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confidentiality</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions: Substances</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What kind of substances should be viewed as ‘a substance’? (legal and illegal)</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What does substance misuse mean? When does use become misuse?</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions: Information/Advice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where would you go to for advice and/or information on drugs?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why would you go there?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is there a gap for good information? Is there somewhere that you would like to be able to direct someone else?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions: Your community/where you live</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are drugs a problem where you live/were brought up? Are drugs a problem in Edinburgh where you study?</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are those problems?</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why do you think that some young people take drugs?</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions: Role of young people</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are you familiar with the term peer education?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you have any experience of it? If so, what?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you think that young people themselves have a role in tackling substance misuse? If so, what is it?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you think young people could be supported in doing this? What do they need?</td>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finish</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Thanks participants for taking part</td>
<td>Cat/Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consent and voucher receipt forms completed</td>
<td>Cat/Lorna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C – Good Shepherd Topic Guide

Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

Good Shepherd

- What does ‘substance misuse’ mean?
- What kind of substances should be viewed as ‘a substance’?

- Where would you go to for advice on drugs and why?

- Are drugs a problem where you live? What are those problems?
- Why do you think some young people take drugs?

- What would you do if a friend had a problem with drugs?
- What would you like to be able to if a friend had a problem with drugs?

- What is the role of young people in tackling substance misuse?
- How can you best be supported in doing this?
- Are there good examples / best practice in your area? What are they? Why do they work?
Appendix D – Evaluation comments for National Discussion Day

- We need to increase harm reduction advice for longer than the current 4 hours of P.S.E (sex education in school is currently only 4 hours – to short)
- The testimonials on the DVD of the young person’s personal experience of using drugs was powerful. How feasible is it for 16-17 year old current on previous drug users to come and educate and explain their stories of drug use (ESPECIALLY if it’s unbiased and can include POSITIVE experience of drugs too.) This is credible but due to illegality
- Great that young people got their say!
- The chocolate cake was very tasty!! ☺
- Very interesting and enjoyable day, I learned a lot!
- Great event and young people presented well!
- Definitely come along again!
- Food was good
- The pace of the day was just right
- Loved the cartoons. Best way I’ve seen ideas pulled together. Far better than groups writing on flipcharts and all pulled into ‘boring’ report. Visual to look at and very relevant
- Great day and good for thought for myself as a specialist practitioner working with young people and how I engage them in treatment
- A suggestion from Grade A – after listening to all the presentations, I think it would be a great idea to have a permanent peer education project in schools, where the 5th and 6th years voluntary teach the younger ones because the pupils will feel comfortable with them and trust them. Before doing the teaching the senior pupils could go through a mini training on drugs from speakers from the ADP or Drugs Action
- It was a good experience to hear various thoughts on drugs use in Scotland. I found some comments quite dated and that the panel dodged numerous questions (and put the own-ness back onto the individual). It was a good chance to be surrounded by people who are all interested in making changes in Scotland
- Our survey showed that young people in West Dunbartonshire believe that organised activities are important in keeping young people out of trouble and away from substances. In the face of
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

all the coming spending cuts, how can we make sure that young people’s services don’t disappear?

- Good event – very interesting and some surprising feedback from national survey. Think some common themes emerging and need for more national direction to support CFE
- Very good event and important to catch ‘voice’ and presence of ‘lovely’ young people. Good for professionals to hear and work together to address
- Interesting day, good venue and catering but missed tea / coffee after lunch in the afternoon
- Good event! Very interesting, so much information 😊
- Very well organised
- Good food
- Facilitators excellent
- Informative
- Lots of material
- Was brill to see young people being so confident
- Thank you for giving our young people this opportunity
- Enjoyed meeting new people
- Got alot of useful information from the day
- Event was fantastic – great format, wonderful presentations, great to hear the young person’s voice, location fab, food great – a brilliant event! Can’t wait to see all feedback etc on Young Scot Website
- So inspiring to see how the young people from all across Scotland have found a voice and came together to present their hard work and expertise
- Great venue and event
- Fab venue, fab food, very well organised. Appreciate all the good work by all the young people and projects. Glad I came look forward to the next one
- In our area we hope to do some more peer led workshops
- Good day, good venue, well organised! Well done
- Delegate list was really impressive, but given survey findings that suggest schools and teachers are key to substance misuse education be good to see how this can be taken forward. On flip-side, important to consider those not in school, perhaps the most vulnerable?!?
- Really good day, all presentations were brilliant and produced alot of information
- Great day, very interesting and informative. As a local investigation team, it was great to present our findings and has been a worthwhile life experience
- Found this conference very insightful and I hope some good things come from it
Peer Led Approaches to Substance Misuse Education

- Really enjoyed the day and loved how young people led / focused the event has been. The only thing missing would have been some feedback on Edinburgh. Finally – Kyle was brilliant! Thanks Again – Crew 2000
- Day been helpful and informative. Hope something comes out of it at a national level and has not been worthless for the peer mentors
- Excellent event, pace was right, presentations were great! Enjoyed the day very much!
- The day was organised brilliantly. I have gathered a lot of information and ideas that I will utilised within my post in Addiction Education. The young people included within the day were inspirational and are clearly role models for younger people within their communities
- I found this very interesting and it showed me how seriously people take young people’s views into consideration
- Today has been an eye opener. I personally come from an area with very little drugs and violence. I never view some areas was so bad. It’s been great also to see the government have a serious interest in the views of young people
- Good, informative day
- Programme was perfect in terms of length and mixture of presentations / discussions
- Need to make sure that we learn from today and implement any changes needed
- Great event, very well thought out and as a 35 year old felt very out of touch with tweets! 😊
- Encourage young people to go to clubs come of the street to reduce crime
- Day was interesting – wary of recommendations being made only from this event
- Young people should be valued not just a lip service
- Young people could be represented on ADP’s
- Really useful day – thanks Young Scot team!
- Good networking opportunity
- Interesting results
- Possibly missed information on what the peer education teams were up to, so misunderstood some results and stats
- Really valuable event – particularly in terms of education, how to engage Children & Young People in a meaningful way. Important that this links to health and wellbeing within curriculum for excellence. Great pace, great MC’s very engaging
- Really interesting event – thoroughly enjoyed the presentations and the issues they raised
- Why are rural areas neglected when we know there is just as big a problem as in the cities? It was good to hear everyone’s points of view, thank you!
It was good seeing that other small towns and communities have the same problems as we do in our town.

It was good to see everyone’s view on the drug problem.

Thank you for today – it was really informative and great to see all the other groups.

The food was good.

The information was helpful.

Learned a lot today, and was interesting to see how other people feel about such a large problem that affect our day to day lives.

Good conference, young people were great! Loads of good work.

Food not so good.

Venue excellent!

Good networking opportunity and inviting other organisations and agencies – good opportunity. Some young people ran over time and death by powerpoint. Loved the venue. Hope that this does inform policy and make changes!

Really interesting, lots of similarities coming through in the presentations we seem to have a substance misuse problem across the country. Good venue and great room set up.

Food was great, thanks!

Schools and clubs should train up groups of young people to deliver workshops within school, as we feel they are much better and we know that young people are much more comfortable with us than teachers. Obviously we would need support in case any young people share stuff and we wouldn’t be able to deal with it but we hope you take our findings and look at ways of getting our message over the decision makers.