“Straight talk” Community mobilisation on action on Alcohol in rural Ireland

Moira Mills North West Alcohol Forum Ltd
Barcelona 2008
Around and around…

• The community is spinning
• Law enforcers are spinning
• Government is spinning
• National alcohol crisis
“The secret of getting ahead is getting started”.

The secret of getting started is breaking the complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one. anon”
NWAF has started

• Time folks please **Policy in action**

• Believability

• Strong academic underpinning

• Community mobilisation A catalyst for change mindset

• Informing opinion leaders
Set up

- Reports of Irish Government Strategic Task Force on Alcohol 2002
- Regional Interagency forum.

- Critical to start up
  - knowledge base of key stakeholders
  - a sense of the local picture
  - an understanding of the tensions that existed within the community
Initial terms of reference

• To review the nature and extent of problems caused by the harmful use of alcohol in the North West of Ireland

• Examine the existing resources and infrastructures already in the NW concerned about reducing the incidence, prevalence and impact of harmful drinking

• Recommend a way of working in the NW in agreement with our partners to begin tackling this issue

• Take action
The Local Picture

• A report “A portrait of our Drinking 2004

1. Audit on Alcohol detoxification in Primary Care
2. Alcohol Injuries in the Emergency dept
3. Audit on Alcohol and public order offences
4. Audit on Alcohol related admissions to medical/surgical ward Acute hospital
5. Community consultations over a geographical area of 250,000 pop
NWAF challenges to change

- Absence of community leadership – community, organisational, political...
- Lack of critical thought
- Ignoring the history & environmental signs
- Complacency
- Subscribing to fatalism
- Ignoring the community's tension on alcohol and drug misuse
- Focusing on short term measures alone
- Focusing on the popular but least effective education initiatives
- Over reliance on the Health sector
The Process...

1. Assess Population Readiness to tackle alcohol Lobby!
2. Invite key People on board Audit Lobby!
3. Develop action plan Lobby!
4. Implement evidence base programmes Lobby!
5. Monitor, Evaluate, mainstream Lobby!
Work of the NWAF

- Offer practical measures for creating effective networks to reduce alcohol related harms
- Build on existing community constructs
- **Refuse to hide** behind the complex arguments
- Assist organisations in the dissemination of alcohol prevention measures specific to their remit
- Use only empirical interventions
- Insist on evaluation
A government approved plan
Tackling alcohol harm

Alcohol Action Plan
2005 - 2010

We know from the evidence what to do, how to do it, when, where, and to whom - we need community action to achieve it.

The North West Alcohol Forum is a community initiative working to reduce harmful drinking in the North West.
NW Alcohol Action Plan  2005-2010

Areas of Action
• Community
• Education
• Health
• Justice

Central Measures
• Awareness Raising
• Intervention
• Evaluation (2008)

35 actions
Integrated working on reducing alcohol harms

Alcohol

6 Community & Voluntary groups

Acute hospitals

vintners

developing the knowledge society

Public sector

Justice
Road safety

Lobbyists, local, national, European

Youth & Families
Powerful Outcome

cross border

NWAF Ltd Not for profit company

The North West Alcohol Forum is a community initiative working to reduce harmful drinking in the North West.
Theory to Action

Diploma in Drug & Alcohol Studies
VEC, NWAF Ltd, RDTF, HSE UL

We know from the evidence what to do, now to do it when, where, and how within our own community as we believe it.
Education Sector Partner

Mission Statement

“To promote, offer and support accessible, inclusive & holistic learning opportunities which will enable young people and adults to empower themselves to reach their full potential in society.”

Co Donegal VEC:-

• Largest Education Service provider in Co Donegal
• 15 Second Level Schools & Colleges
• 6 Adult Education Centres
• Outdoor Education
• Music Education
• Youthwork
Why the VEC is involved:

• National & Regional Alcohol Plans
• VEC Education Plan 2006-2010
• CEO – Director of NWAF
• University Limerick Diploma
• Partnership – NWAF/VEC/RDTF/HSE/UL
• Management Committee
VEC Role in Progressing UL Diploma

• Promoting the Programme throughout County
• Experience of Delivery of Educational Programmes
• Venue
• Programme Co-ordinator
• Current situation
On going Company Challenges

- Curiosity
- Challenges from business sector
- Our Silo mentality
- The Ah heh syndrome!
- Political will
- NWAF capacity to deliver
- Legislation
- Competing drug agenda in the community
- Everyone wanting to Hook it all on the youth
- Hook it all on parents
- Hook it all on the schools...
- Hook it all on individual responsibility
- Sustainable funding
Plenary session & Questions
Additional notes

Listen, Learn and Lead
Outcomes

- Increased community and family alcohol education programmes,
- Greater support in schools for Social and Personal Health Education programmes in relation to alcohol,
- Fewer alcohol-related admissions to Mental Health Service units,
- Increased interventions for alcohol-related attendances at A&E Departments,
- Reduced public order offences,
- Increased use of Brief Intervention for alcohol related harm in primary care settings,
- Greater overall awareness about community responsibility with regard to harmful drinking.
- Reduced drink driving offences
NWAF Ltd

- **Vision**: What do we want to achieve
- **Mission**: What will we do to achieve this end result
- **Goals**: What are the major directives required by the us all to support what we intend to do.

**Map**
- **Objectives**: the actions that that will guide the directives
- **Evaluation**: collation of the data, variables and events used to track progress
NWAF Ltd & Community participation outputs

- Regional Drugs Task Force
- County Drug Committees
- Donegal Road Safety Working Group
- Uni. Of Limerick Design Team
- School Completion Programme
- Loft LK Adult Advisory Committee
- Donegal VEC Substance Misuse Steering Group
- Youth Participation Advisory Group
- North West Regional Alcohol Partnership (cross border)
- Training in Brief Intervention
- Training in community mobilisation start up
- Small bursary awardees
- Vintners initiative
- Youth Council initiative
- Acute hospital Forum
- Education providers
Barriers to community mobilisation on reducing alcohol harms

• Do you as a community leader or stakeholder support alcohol harm prevention?

• Do you believe that prevention works?

• Are you as local worker/leader hopeful and do you believe that reducing the harms caused by harmful drinking is possible?

• What types of prevention approaches do you believe work or do not work in reducing alcohol related harms in our community?

• What are the measures that contribute to sustainability?
Sustainability of Community mobilisation reliant on

- Change of policy direction in Ireland – National Alcohol Strategy
- Development of integrated Drug and Alcohol action plans
- Persistent lobbying and awareness raising
- Evaluation (Interim 2007)
- An All Island of Ireland approach
- Sustainable funding