

Drugs and Alcohol Misuse in Revoe

Consultation Report

September 2018

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Summary

- This report refers to a consultation at Revoe Learning Academy on Saturday 22nd September 2018. The event was organised by MutualGain on behalf of Lancashire Constabulary, assisted by Revoe Learning Academy, Blackpool Council and Revoelution. Volunteers and table facilitators included members of drug support agencies such as Horizon, Addaction and a Revoe peer-support group. Local residents were recruited to the event through the School and by Revoelution.
- Over eighty people attended. Only three questions were put to participants to ensure in-depth discussion of the topics.
- Responses to the first question – “What’s good about Revoe?” – mainly focused on ‘Community’. There were two overall themes to these responses – either agency support for the community (including small community-based groups) or individuals within the community supporting each other.
- The second question asked participants for their views of the effects of drugs and alcohol. It was interesting to see here that although crime/anti-social behaviour and the effects of substance misuse on people’s health were frequent comments, the category with the most responses referred to social effects, particularly upon young people. Revoe residents are clearly concerned about the wider effects of drugs and alcohol on the community.
- The third and final question asked people to consider how the community might help address the issue. Although the highest number of responses referred to enforcement, and the third highest to ‘agency support’, the second highest number of responses referred to ‘individual support’, with comments like “smile and say hello – it makes a difference”, “look out for each other” and “don’t judge”.
- The partners involved in the consultation will make arrangements over the next few weeks to develop some clear actions from the feedback. We have a contact list of residents interested in continuing the conversation, and we are in touch with organisations who will be part of that discussion – if you’d like to be involved please get in touch – see contacts on page 13.

Introduction

The misuse of drugs, particularly alcohol, have long been a problem in Revoe. As far back as the 19th Century the George Hotel was 'a great centre for fisticuffs among the unruly elements of Ibbison Street'. This area of densely-packed terraces just outside the centre of Blackpool tended to be home to seasonal workers servicing the tourist trade and therefore households with what we would now call 'chaotic lifestyles' were, even then, more common here than in other areas.

And the problem is still here. The misuse of drugs and alcohol not only has a direct effect on the health of people involved, but also has wider implications for the area. The perception in Blackpool that Revoe is a dangerous neighbourhood filled with 'unruly elements' discourages businesses from investing in the area, reduces house prices and means that people who move into Revoe tend not to be here by choice. The Public Sector's interactions with the area tend to be reactive, responding to reported problems and focusing on issues that further reinforce this negative reputation.

Young people are particularly badly affected. The often chaotic lifestyles of transient families with little connection to the area means that children in the household are more likely to have low educational attainment and low aspirations, be more likely to participate in crime or anti-social behaviour and be very unlikely to access higher education. They are also far more likely than average to become problem users of drugs themselves.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope in this grim picture. Our consultations show that a strong community spirit remains, and that residents recognise that they can play an active role in addressing the problem.

Background

A series of consultations have led up to this Word Café on Drugs and Alcohol. In 2014, the Revoelution Community Profile set out the feedback from over 300 conversations with residents and listed five priorities identified by residents for the improvement of Revoe: crime and antisocial behaviour; environment; businesses on Central Drive; young people; and health. Within the health priority drugs and mental health were identified as the two most pressing concerns. A World Café consultation of residents at Revoe Learning Academy in September 2017 clearly showed that residents' priorities remained largely unchanged, and drugs and alcohol were prominent in the responses. At a 'street living-room' consultation on health run by Revoelution in June 2018, over 70 residents participated; when asked 'What do you think are the two or three most important health issues in Revoe' drugs and alcohol were the clear top priority - 57% of respondents referred to the problem.

In 2017 Lancashire Constabulary engaged MutualGain to deliver training to Police and partner agencies including Blackpool Council, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Blackpool Better Start and BSafe Blackpool around community engagement and consultation. Revoelution,

Blackpool's Lottery-funded Big Local project, was involved in promoting the event and recruiting volunteers and participants.

Because drugs and alcohol were an identified priority in the 2017 World Café and other consultations it was decided that this year's event should focus on this particular issue, not only allowing residents to voice their concerns but also looking at how the community could be involved in dealing with the problem.



Feedback info-graphic from the September 2017 consultation

Event Planning and Delivery

Once the theme of the consultation was decided relevant agencies were contacted to be involved in the planning of the event and to provide table facilitators on the day. These agencies included Fulfilling Lives, the Lived Experience Team, Horizons, Addaction and a local peer support group. It was important that as well as the 'general public' we had input from people with experience of dealing with drug and alcohol dependency so that the issue could be discussed from all sides.

Because of the success of the World Café event in 2017 it was decided to run a similar consultation this year. A World Café is a relatively informal consultation, using methods that help ensure residents feel welcome and relaxed enough to fully engage in the event and answer fully and freely. Tea and cakes were provided, and the event was hosted by Inspector David Oldfield in a manner that encouraged informal chat. Each table hosted a small group of people with a facilitator to ensure that views are captured accurately; participants were instructed to write comments directly onto a tablecloth.



MutualGain ran a series of training sessions so that facilitators and others involved in the delivery of the project understood the requirements on the day. Further volunteers were recruited through Revoe Learning Academy and Revoelution. The consultation was promoted on a range of social media channels, through presentations at groups, through newsletters and face-to-face in the lead-up to the event. Attendees were offered £10 High Street vouchers and Blackpool Football Club Community Trust offered free tickets to a Blackpool FC match.

The event was held on Saturday 22nd September at Revoe Learning Academy. People were encouraged to engage in free and open conversation around their tables and write down any comments on the tablecloth; therefore each person could provide several responses. Only three questions were put to participants as we wanted in-depth discussion on the issues rather than quick answers to several questions. The comments were written up onto a spreadsheet by Lancashire Constabulary, and the results categorised by Revoelution; categorisation was discussed at a meeting of facilitators with a Blackpool Council representative and emailed to other organisers/facilitators for confirmation. Comments that were unclear or could not be categorised were discounted; therefore, results below reflect numbers of categorised responses.



Results

Attendees: 87 people attended the event, the majority of whom were residents of Revoe or directly involved in drug/alcohol support and rehabilitation.

Each of the Categories discussed below was split into several Sub-Categories; these can be seen in the full response list in Appendix 1.



Question 1: What is good about Revoe now?

Total responses: 205 Total categorised responses: 190

This first question was deliberately positive. We wanted to avoid the day being negative in tone from the outset which could have resulted in complaints about issues relating to drugs and alcohol extending into wide-ranging ‘grumbling’. Instead we hoped that the positivity expressed in responses to this question could be built upon in Question 3.

Despite the wording of the question, 16.3% of categorised responses (31 out of 197) were negative in tone, raising issues such as unemployment, poor environment and antisocial behaviour by young people. It is perhaps unsurprising that in an area with such a range of problems people want to raise concerns, and consultations in Revoe have historically tended to be problem-focused. However, it was heartening to find that over 80% of responses were positive and drew attention to a range of good things in Revoe.

By far the most common responses were categorised as ‘Community’, ‘Community Support’ and ‘Facilities’. In the first of these categories, people talked about the wider community – “Sense of people coming together”, and individuals – “Nice neighbours”, “Friendly people”, “People who care and want the best for the community”. In the Community Support category the work of various agencies was recognised, particularly Revoe Learning Academy and Revoelution (probably as these two organisations played key roles in hosting and recruiting for the event), but also the Police, Bugs2Butterflies, His Provision, Dads in Sheds and others. In the Facilities category Revoe Park was easily the main response but others included the Library, Children’s Centre and access to transport. A further positive in this category were ‘Activities’ – sport and arts – with Blackpool FC Community Trust’s Kicks project specifically mentioned several times.



Question 1 response summary. See Appendix 1 for full list

Category	Number	Percent	Generally positive or negative
Community	31	16.3	Positive
Community Support	58	30.5	Positive
Crime	1	0.5	Negative
Drugs and alcohol	5	2.6	Negative
Unemployment	2	1.0	Negative
Engagement (difficulty of)	5	2.6	Negative
Environment	15	7.9	Negative
Facilities/Activities	50	26.3	Positive
Young People/Family background (ASB, lack of activities)	17	8.9	Negative
'Nothing'	3	1.6	Negative
Shops	3	1.6	Positive

World Café report Question 2: What does substance misuse (drugs, alcohol etc) mean to you?

Total responses: 377 Total categorised responses: 350

In this question we asked participants to focus on the main issue of the consultation – drugs and alcohol. Table facilitators asked people to consider not just the personal effects of substance misuse but also the wider implications. This successfully elicited the largest number of responses for all three questions and raised a wide range of issues. As well as the direct medical consequences on individuals, issues included crime and antisocial behaviour, community/social effects, environment, financial, and services.

Unsurprisingly, responses around crime, antisocial behaviour and community safety were common – 23% of categorised responses. Comments included “Causes more crime”, “Too scared to go out”, “Risk of violence” and “Drug dealing in gardens and bus stops”. However, this was not the top category; 34% of categorised responses referred to Community/Social effects, particularly around young people. Comments in this category included: “Family breakdown”, “Children roaming the streets”, “No routine or boundaries”, “Child underachieves at school and lies for adult”. A sub-category with a high number of responses (17, 4.9%) was Isolation, with comments including “Lonely”, “Lose family



members” and “Friendships broken”. These responses around social effects were closely linked to those in the Finance category, with comments like: “Families sinking into poverty” and “Homelessness”. The Medical category also saw a high number of responses, recognising the effect on the individual.

Because of the question, these responses were necessarily negative in tone. However, it is interesting to note that crime/community safety was not the top response category – participants in the consultation were not thinking about drug users simply as a problem, but considered the effects on the individual and on their friends and family.

Question 2 response summary. See Appendix 1 for full list

Category	Number	Percent
Crime/antisocial behaviour	82	23.43
Community/Social	119	34.00
Environment	32	9.14
Finance	20	5.71
Medical	59	16.86
Services	21	6.00
Substances	17	4.86

Question 3: How could you be part of the solution?

Total responses: 253 Total categorised responses: 224

The wording of this questions was designed to ensure that participants considered the community’s role in addressing identified issues, rather than relying on external agencies. Despite this effort a substantial number of responses referred to the need for more enforcement (Enforcement category responses = 18%) and support agency involvement (Agency Support category responses = 15%) Comments included: “More CCTV”, “More police on the streets”, “Neighbourhood Watch”. However, the Agency Support category did at least suggest some community awareness; comments included: “Help parents talk about their problems”, “Advertise what is available”, “Make it inclusive”, “Motivation workshops”. We also categorised some responses as ‘Community’ if they didn’t refer directly to drugs and alcohol; 7% of responses fell into this category and comments included: “Attend community events”, “Treat all people the same”, “Don’t add to the problem”.



Further evidence that participants were actively looking at the community’s role in dealing with the problem in a positive way is that fact that the same percentage of responses as the Enforcement category fell into our Individual Support category (18%), with comments such as “Smile and say hello – it makes a difference”, “Look out for each other”, “Be a good example” and “Don’t judge”. Similarly, responses in the Volunteering category (6%) and Engagement category (8%) included: “We all need to work together”, “Getting involved and helping”, “Volunteers to help previous addicts as buddies”. The Distraction Activities category (7%) included comments about activities for young people to help them avoid getting involved in drugs, and the Education category (6%) included the comment: “Info for people who don’t understand the reasons for other people’s addictions”. All of these comments demonstrate an understanding of the importance of community involvement in dealing with the issues.

Question 3 response summary. See Appendix 1 for full list

Category	Number	Percent
Agency Support	33	14.7
Community/Engagement	33	14.7
Distraction Activities	16	7.1
Education	13	5.8
Employment	3	1.3
Enforcement	42	18.8
Environment	20	8.9
Health/Mental Health	4	1.8
Housing	5	2.2
Individual Support	41	18.3
Volunteering	14	6.2

Conclusion – What’s Next?

This consultation demonstrates a clear recognition among residents of Revoe that the community has a part to play in addressing drugs and alcohol misuse in Revoe, and that it’s not enough to simply rely upon the police and support agencies to deal with the problem.

It is clear from these comments that residents are aware that ‘drugs and alcohol’ isn’t a separate issue – it’s closely related to mental health, poverty, isolation and other ‘wider determinants of health’. The responses also show that there is still a ‘sense of community’ in the area, that despite Revoe having a reputation for being a ‘problem’ neighbourhood with a transient population of residents that don’t connect with their neighbours, people here do in fact care and look out for each other.

This gives us confidence that, in conversations we have over the coming weeks, we will be able develop solutions that are based upon the knowledge and experience of residents alongside the expertise of police and support agencies, and that people who live here can play an active role. If you’d like to be involved in these discussions please get in touch – see the contact list on page 13.

Appendix 1 – Responses (full spreadsheets are available on request from Revoelution)

Question 1: What is good about Revoe now?

Total responses: 205 Total categorised responses: 190

Response category	Number	Percent	Response subcategory	Number	Example
Activities	14	7.37	Sport	5	
			Kicks	5	
			Art	4	
Community	31	16.32	None/general	9	Sense of community; people coming together; people who care and want the best for the community
			Activities	2	Things for young people
			Diversity	3	
			Events	4	
			Individuals	13	Nice neighbours; friendly people
Community Support	58	30.53	General	9	
			Bugs2Buttflys	4	
			Dads in Sheds	2	
			His Prov	6	
			Police	5	
			Revoelution	15	
			Revoe School	16	
			Skool of Street	1	
Crime	1	0.53	Impact	1	Children see their parents and carers committing crime and it becomes the norm.
Drugs and Alcohol	5	2.63	None	5	Drunks and druggies and anti-social behaviour
Unemployment	2	1.05	None	2	An ethos of 'no need to work'; hard to reach families
Engagement	5	2.63	Difficult	5	Hard to reach families; a lot of mistrust
Environment	15	7.89	Litter + fly tipping	5	
			Dog fouling	1	
			none/general	9	Colourful gardens; quiet; clean
Facilities	36	18.95	Park	22	
			Children's Centre	2	
			Community C	3	
			Library	2	
			YP (lack of)	1	
			Transport	3	Bus routes
			Football club	1	
			School	1	

			Beach	1	
Family Background	4	2.11	none	4	Attitude to working – 2 nd /3 rd gen non-workers; no one to inspire children to achieve; some great families who want their best for the children; issues that families have – crime, drugs unemployment that follow through generations
Nothing	3	1.58	none	3	
Shops	3	1.58			
Young People	13	6.84	Activities for	9	Not enough; good area for kids
			ASB	3	Lack of respect; youths hang around the streets which is intimidating
			Neglect	1	

Number of positives: 159. Number of negatives: 31

World Café report Question 2: What does substance misuse (drugs, alcohol etc) mean to you?

Total responses: 377 Total categorised responses: 350

Category	Number	%	Sub-category	Number	Example comments
ASB	82	23.43	None/general	54	'Causes more crime'; people hanging around; assault; drug dealing in gardens and bus stops
			Safety	23	Too scared to go out; frightened; risk of violence
			Community	1	Bad neighbours
			Education	1	People don't know the effects
			Family	2	Domestic violence
			Finance	1	Drugs=poverty=prostitution, crime, homelessness
Community (social effects)	119	34.00	Chaotic lives	16	Family breakdown; children roaming the streets;
			Education	6	Kids think drugs are cool; learning is disrupted; peer pressure
			Environment	1	Children can't play in back lanes because of needles

			Family	37	Child underachieves at school, lies for adult; no routine or boundaries; child addiction
			Isolation	17	Lonely; lose family members; friendships broken
			Mental health	2	Stress and upset
			Safety	5	
			Services	1	
			General	30	High community turnover – no stability; making society a worse place
Environment	32	9.54	None/general	30	Drug smell; poor maintenance of property; dangerous materials left around; smashed bottles; needles
			ASB	2	Fly-tipping
Finance	20	5.71	None/general	15	The government needs to stop paying to support their habit; families sinking into poverty; homelessness
			Chaotic lives	4	
			Family	1	
Medical	59	16.86	None/general	27	10 minute appointment not enough time to work on issues; death; decline in health; self-medicating, not getting help and no direction in life
			Mental health	30	Drugs not solution; cry for help; pain; paranoia
			Chaotic lives	1	
			Isolation	1	
Services	21	4.86	None/general	15	What services are available? Why are they not better used?; services over-subscribed; group support
			Education	4	
			Community	1	
			Environment	1	Council wanting to charge people for removing sharps
Substances	17	6.00	None/general	17	Alcohol; spice; heroin; prescription drugs; I am an ex-crack addict

World Café report Question 3: How could you be part of the solution?

Total responses: 251 Total categorised responses: 223

Category	Number	%	Sub-category	Number	Example
Agency support	33	14.73	Local services	11	Drop-in centre; motivation workshops; safer injecting rooms
			Engagement	2	Make it inclusive
			Families	1	Help to make parents able to talk about their problems
			Lived experience	3	
			Peer support	3	Mutual aid meetings
			Policy change	1	Prescribe heroin
			Signposting	8	Leaflets with info about soup kitchens etc; doctors to assess them; advertise what is available
			Soup kitchens	1	
			Training	1	Not enough qualified people
			None/general	2	
Community	16	7.14	None/general	16	Attend community events; treat all people the same; respect; don't add to the problem
Distraction activities	16	7.14	Young people	12	More activities for young people; youth clubs for teens
			None/general	4	
Education	13	5.80	None/general	10	Info groups for people who don't understand or who aren't aware of the reasons for other people's addictions
			Young people	3	
Employment	3	1.34			Job meaning purpose for life
Enforcement	42	18.75	CCTV	3	More CCTV
			Community	4	Neighbourhood Watch
			Legal	5	Smoke free on the park; legalise it
			Police	11	More police officers on the streets;
			Reporting	17	Don't be afraid to report it;
			None/general	2	Stop the begging which feeds the addictions; stop the drinking on the streets
Engagement	17	7.59	Community	7	We all need to work together; fundraising;
			Local Authority	1	Get Local Authority to listen
			None/general	9	Attend meetings

Environment	20	8.93	None/general	20	Designated litter-pickers; tidy Central Drive
Health	1	0.45	None/general	1	Better emergency responses
Housing	5	2.23	None/general	5	Better housing conditions
Individual support	41	18.30	None/general	41	Smile and say hello – it makes a difference; look out for each other; be a good example; don't judge
Mental health	3	1.34	None/general	3	Mental health help
Volunteering	14	6.25	Peer support	7	Volunteers to help previous addicts as buddies
			None/general	7	Getting involved and helping

Contacts

To be involved in further discussions around drugs and alcohol in Revoe, contact Revoelution at: info@revoelution.org.uk, call 01253 423430 or visit the Revoelution Hub at 1, Ibbison Court, Blackpool FY1 4AU.

To discuss future or similar consultations/activities including world café consultations and participatory budgeting, contact MutualGain: info@mutualgain.org or call 0203 887 2859

For information on Lancashire Constabulary's role in the consultation and involvement in future discussions on the issue, contact Inspector Dave Oldfield: 1578@lancashire.pnn.police.uk. For information on Blackpool Council's role contact Matt Dougall: Matthew.Dougall@blackpool.gov.uk

To discuss Revoe Learning Academy's role in Revoe community activities, and use of school facilities for projects and events, email Dayle Harrison: dayle.harrison@revoe.blackpool.sch.uk



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