

Youthline's position on alcohol reform 2014

A Youthline Position Paper

This paper sets out Youthline's position on alcohol policy reform with an explicit focus on community partnerships. Research suggests that young people are highly likely to experience harm associated with alcohol misuse, and that youth attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol use may have serious implications across their life-span (see Youthline's, *Best Practice Interventions in Youth Substance Misuse and Abuse*). The aim of alcohol-related policy is harm-minimisation through access restriction and discouraging the positive perception of alcohol consumption by young people. However, Youthline takes the stance that as well as reducing risk factors, enhancing young people's resilience is crucial to positive youth development and healthy decision-making. Equally important is a wide-ranging and multi-faceted approach that engages community stakeholders.

Youthline's stance is that local council, as well as wider government, engage with community organisations and young people to form collaborative, informative, and bi-directional partnerships. It is also important that youth-oriented organisations, and young people themselves, are provided with the knowledge and means to engage in local initiatives as well as contribute to policy formation. This could be realised through the utilisation of youth advisory groups in developing youth-centred approaches to alcohol and media consumption, and adequate resourcing for communities to develop their own approaches to fostering resiliency alongside wider policies.

Key messages:

- Quality youth participation in local policy decision-making and enactment is necessary for positive youth development
- Policy should be implemented alongside local community-based actions, through community engagement and support
- Local policy should align to, and provide direction for, strengths-based resiliency development alongside risk minimisation.