



## **Consultation on developing a new plan to reduce alcohol related problems in Galway City**

### **SUMMARY REPORT 2019**

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## CONTEXT

In 2013, Galway was the first city in Ireland to develop a strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm.

The Galway City Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Alcohol Related Harm (2013-2017) involved a multiagency approach, both in the development and implementation across key areas of prevention, alcohol availability, training and support services, monitoring and evaluation.

An evidence-based approach was central to the many actions implemented over the five year period. The annual action plan had an in-built review that was critical in monitoring progress.

Some of the successes from the first strategy included an increased awareness of alcohol harm, tracking alcohol availability in Galway City and young peoples' assessment of alcohol marketing.

In 2015, the Galway City Alcohol Survey was undertaken which provided greater insights on drinking patterns, drinking context and harms as well as views on policy issues across a sample of adults in Galway City.

An external evaluation of the Galway City Alcohol Strategy in 2017 recommended that a second strategy should be developed.

The assessment identified the most successful outcomes as:

1. raising awareness and agenda setting,
2. linking of actions with the research evidence
3. valuable progress in linkages between agencies and the development of a sense of shared responsibility.

Galway City Alcohol Forum made a decision to develop a second alcohol strategy to build on work undertaken through Galway Healthy Cities.

In addition a second strategy also supports the implementation of key national policies such as *Healthy Ireland and Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery A health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025*.

## CONSULTATION ON NEW ALCOHOL STRATEGY FOR GALWAY CITY, 2019

The overall goal of the alcohol strategy is to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm in Galway City, thereby making Galway City a more pleasant and safer place for everyone.

Ultimately, it is about creating a social context of drinking less, thus preventing harm to self and others. In Galway City, the vast majority (81%) of

people are in favour of having an alcohol strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol harm, as reported in the 2015 Galway City Survey.

Agencies and community groups working together can protect and enhance the health and well-being of people in Galway City.

## METHODOLOGY

Galway City Alcohol Forum undertook a consultation process in April/May 2019 to inform the development of a second alcohol strategy.

This involved a short online survey with ten questions that asked about key issues of concern for individuals or organisations in relation to alcohol in Galway City and to identify priority actions to reduce alcohol related harm.

Based on the research evidence, people were asked what can be done to

- **Restrict availability of alcohol in Galway City**
- **Reduce alcohol marketing**
- **Increase availability of alcohol treatment services**
- **Protect children from exposure to alcohol harm**

Survey participants were also asked

- **What are organisations doing to reduce alcohol related harm?**
- **How best to promote awareness of alcohol harm in Galway City?**

All members of the Galway City Alcohol Forum were asked to liaise with relevant organisations and to promote and encourage submissions through the online survey process.

A media campaign was undertaken to encourage participation, using local radio and print media.

There were **350 responses** to the survey, the vast majority completed online 333(95%) by respondents, with a small number 17(5%) completed in hard copy which were subsequently entered manually.

Many of the questions provided space for comments and some were open ended. This provided a rich source of information.

Most people took the opportunity to give their views and showed a clear understanding of the problems and possible solutions regarding alcohol in Galway City.



# RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON NEW ALCOHOL STRATEGY FOR GALWAY CITY, 2019

## 1. CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BROAD AFFILIATION

- The highest category of respondents who completed the submission, were **individuals** (31%), those from **third level college** (30%) and those from the **Health Service Executive** (15%).
- Other categories of respondents include An Garda Síochána, Voluntary Organisations, Tusla, Education/Youth organisations, Local Community Groups and Galway City Council (Figure 1).

### CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT'S

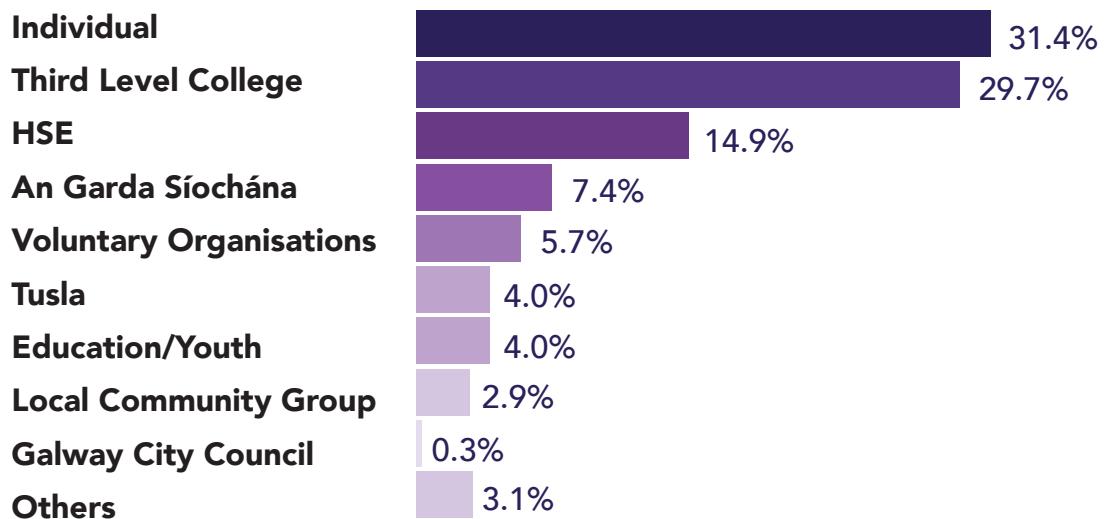


Figure 1: Category of respondent's to survey

## 2. KEY ISSUES OF MAJOR CONCERN IN RELATION TO ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY

About half (50%) of all respondents identified the following five areas as major issues of concern in relation to alcohol in Galway City: Exposure of children to alcohol, Availability of alcohol treatment, Alcohol related crime, Public drunkenness and Underage drinking (Figure 2).

These issues reflect the negative consequences of harmful use of alcohol in Galway City. While several of the other issues, primarily around the availability of alcohol and its marketing reflect the contributory factors to the harmful use of alcohol.

### MAJOR ISSUES OF CONCERN IN RELATION TO ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY

- Exposure of children/young people to alcohol**
- Availability of alcohol treatment**
- Alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour**
- People being intoxicated**
- Underage drinking**
- Availability of cheap alcohol**
- Drink driving**
- Availability of alcohol**
- Number of places selling alcohol**
- Advertising and marketing of alcohol**
- Public drinking**

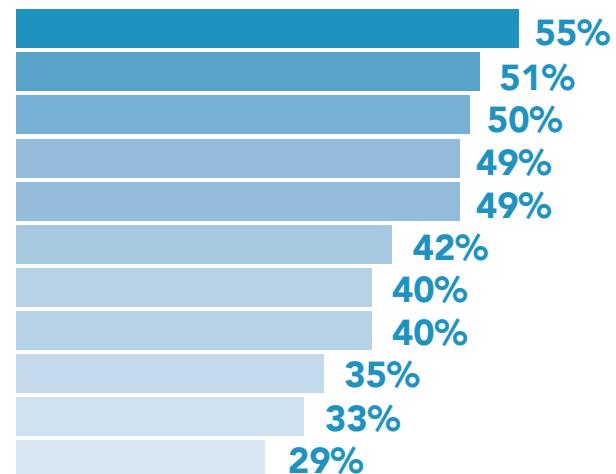


Figure 2: Major Issues of concern in relation to alcohol in Galway City

### EXTENSIVE COMMENTARY ON ISSUES OF CONCERN ABOUT ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY

There was extensive commentary on these issues of concern about alcohol in Galway City.

- In relation to **exposure of children to alcohol**, several commented about pressure on young people to drink (alcohol links to sport, fund raising school events, the acceptance and normalisation of drunkenness) and the learned behaviours from observing adults at home and in the wider community.

*"Exposure of children is wholesale, as ALL events are associated with alcohol, sports, community, school events (dancing with stars, race nights, table quiz etc) all organised around drink"*

Several respondents mentioned the risk of brain damage and addiction linked to youth drinking.

- In relation to **public drinking**, issues raised were problem locations (Claddagh Basin, Spanish Arch and Eyre Square), pollution (green areas, rivers) and dangers of drunkenness on streets (to self and others on street).

*"Not good on fine days to see crowds openly drinking in public spaces e.g. Eyre Square, Claddagh Quays, especially when it's illegal"*

- For **alcohol related crime**, safety issues were raised (unprovoked attacks on street, anti-social behaviour in ED) and disturbances in residential areas.

People being intoxicated was considered 'common place on a night out', 'hard to avoid' with many people drinking to get drunk rather than to enjoy a social drink in Galway City.

- On a more positive note, many people commented on the reduction in **drink driving** since the changes in the law, recognising the importance of implementing effective policies.
  - Respondents commented that alcohol was 'too available and too cheap' recognising that 'cheap and discounted alcohol is a real temptation' with an oversupply of outlets selling alcohol in Galway City.
  - Several respondents mentioned that
- "Youth are particularly influenced by alcohol marketing"*

and some suggested that a great deal of advertising was aimed at younger people and glamorised alcohol.

Others suggested there was an increase in target marketing at females. One respondent colourfully suggested –

*"Galway feels like the Republic of Diageo".*

There was also the sense that alcohol is marketed as "a vital component of any social occasion and essential to enjoying oneself".

### 3. PRIORITY ACTIONS TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF CONCERN IN RELATION TO ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY

Using the list of issues of concern relating to alcohol in Galway City in section 2, each respondent was asked to select what priority actions they would like to see addressed in relation to alcohol in Galway City. The rank order of the top four priority actions selected were:

**A**

**Availability of alcohol**

**B**

**Exposure of children to alcohol**

**C**

**Availability of alcohol treatment**

**D**

**Alcohol related crime, public order and anti-social behaviour**

### 4. RESTRICTING THE AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY – WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Responses were first categorised under the headings below and then rank ordered. Respondents identified four key ways to reduce the availability of alcohol in Galway City:

- 1) Reduce number of off-licences**
- 2) Greater enforcement of laws**
- 3) Reduce hours of sale of alcohol**
- 4) Increase price of alcohol**

- In relation to a reduction in the number of off-licences, many respondents suggested that alcohol should not be sold in shops and petrol stations, but confined to off-licences premises only.

- Many people called for greater enforcement of Galway City Bye-Laws, specifically in relation to no public drinking.
- The focus of reducing hours of sale of alcohol was mainly in relation to off-licences. Cheap alcohol, especially in off-licences, was frequently mentioned.
- Increasing the price of alcohol through the proposed minimum unit pricing was recommended

*"The proposed MUP is long overdue and urgently needed".*

## 5. REDUCING ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF ALCOHOL IN GALWAY CITY – WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Three main actions, in rank order, were identified by respondents to reduce advertising and promotion of alcohol in Galway City:

- a) **Ban alcohol advertising in public places**
- b) **Reduce alcohol marketing**
- c) **Promote alcohol free events in Galway City**

- Respondents suggested that a ban on alcohol advertising in public places would help to protect children and young people from constant exposure to risk, given the research evidence that advertising entices children to start drinking.

- It was also suggested that

*"Galway City should aim to be an alcohol advertising free zone".*

Alcohol marketing linked to arts festivals, sporting events, in shops and on social media were identified where alcohol marketing could be reduced.

- Many respondents called for celebration of community, sport, families and social space without alcohol.

## 6 & 7. SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN GALWAY

Respondents were asked their level of satisfaction with current support services in Galway for those affected by alcohol and for those affected by someone else's drinking.

- Only one in ten respondents were satisfied with current support services in Galway, while approximately half were dissatisfied with current services (Figure 3). This suggests there is a significant gap and an urgent need to provide adequate treatment and support services for the people of Galway City.
- In commentary on services, several respondents highlighted that the lack of

resources and treatment options is a major issue and that without treatment availability, many people suffer with alcohol dependency issues.

- The issue of cost was also raised by some –  
*"If you have money you get better care"*

and the lack of awareness of where services are available.

### SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL



Figure 3: Satisfaction with Support Services in Galway City

## 8. BEST WAYS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF ALCOHOL RELATED HARM IN GALWAY CITY

Finding effective ways to communicate with the citizens of Galway City is essential for the success for the new Alcohol Strategy.

Respondents suggest that social media is by far the most useful (90%) means of communicating with the people of Galway (Figure 4).

The second most useful way to communicate involves face to face engagement - training and capacity building (72%) and also workshops/ seminars (60%).

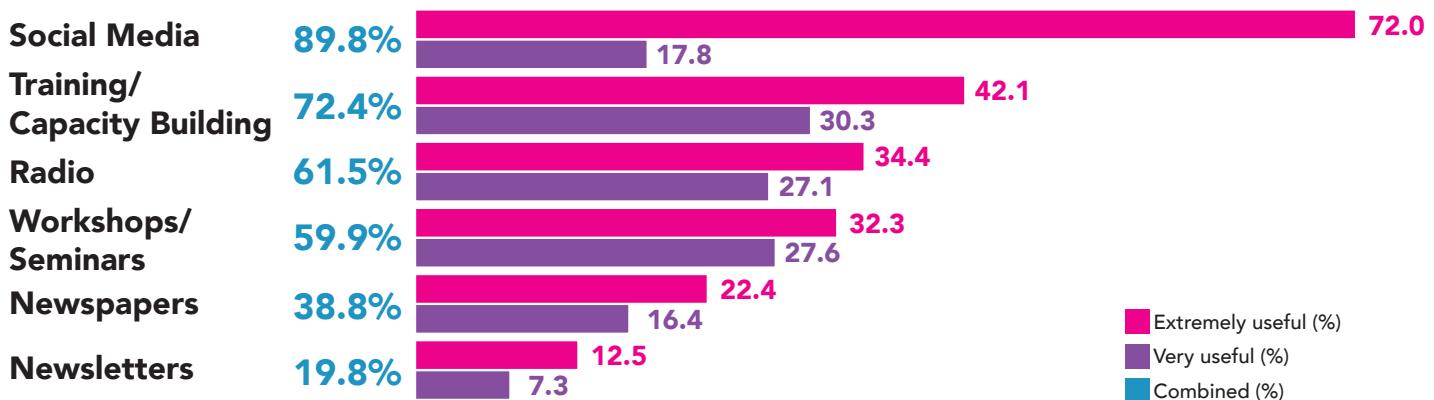


Figure 4: Best ways to promote awareness of alcohol related harm in Galway City

## 9. BETTER PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM EXPOSURE TO ALCOHOL RELATED HARM IN GALWAY CITY

Respondents identified five ways to better protect children and young people from alcohol related harm

- a) Education
- b) Enforcement of alcohol laws
- c) Reduce access/availability to alcohol
- d) Reduce alcohol marketing/advertising
- e) Alternatives

- Responses in rank order showed that many respondents suggested that more education for young people and parents was the primary solution to protecting children and young people from exposure to alcohol related harm.

However, while education is important in increasing knowledge of alcohol related harm

and in building support for effective policies, it does not change individual drinking behaviour.

This is a well-researched area and has been documented in most developed countries across the world (Babor et al 2010<sup>1</sup>). The key factor that influences and encourages young people to drink is the messages they absorb from their daily surroundings. Issues like easy access to alcohol and heavy marketing and promotion of alcohol linked to almost every social occasion in Ireland reinforces the norms, expectations and behaviour around alcohol.

Drunkenness is normalised culturally, linked to almost all celebrations across society, such as sport, family gatherings, community activities and the like. Children learn from observing parents and adults in their family, local community and through the range of communication channels that currently exist.

- Enforcement issues were also raised – checking ID, second hand purchase of alcohol, alcohol consumption on buses to teen discos, problems with youth drinking after exams or on major public holidays, especially around waterways.

*"Stop the consumption of alcohol in public parks"*

- Restricting availability of alcohol was highlighted  
*"Remove alcohol from public events"*  
*"Reduce drink bought by older teens"*
- Addressing alcohol marketing was also raised by a number of respondents with numerous comments including  
*"Ban advertising in public funded sports facilities, bill boards, festivals, discounted alcohol for communion and confirmation events"*
- Many respondents suggest having more alcohol free celebrations in local communities, to help re-focus the expectation that 'to have fun you need alcohol'.

## 10. WHAT IS YOUR ORGANISATION DOING TO REDUCE ALCOHOL HARM IN GALWAY CITY?

There were four main categories of activity reported by respondents:

- 1) Enforcement of Alcohol Laws
- 2) Education/Training
- 3) Support and Treatment Services
- 4) Alcohol Policy

**1. ENFORCEMENT OF  
ALCOHOL LAWS**

**2. EDUCATION/  
TRAINING**

**3. SUPPORT AND  
TREATMENT SERVICES**

**4. ALCOHOL POLICY**

## 1. ENFORCEMENT OF ALCOHOL LAWS

An Garda Síochána is the lead agency responsible for enforcing Public Order and Liquor Licensing laws in Galway City.

This involves patrolling of city streets and enforcing legislation. Enforcement includes seizing alcohol being consumed in public places in Galway City which is contrary to the Galway City Council Bye-laws.

Enforcement of the national liquor licensing laws includes compliance with closing times and the checking of age cards to ensure those under age are not buying or consuming alcohol.

The Gardaí also develop links with young people through community policing.

## 2. EDUCATION / TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The consultation process referenced 19 organisations that provide some level of education and training activities in Galway City. Statutory agencies include HSE, Galway University Hospital, Community Healthcare West, Tusla, Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force, GRETB, GMIT, NUIG.

There are also several organisations who provide some level of education and training activities

especially to young people, which include No 4 Youth Services, Youth Work Ireland, Foróige Youth Reach, Galway Technical Institute, Primary Schools, Enable Ireland, Westside Resource Centre, Galway Traveller Movement, Brothers of Charity, and Galway Simon Community.

## 3. SUPPORT AND TREATMENT SERVICES

There were 12 organisations mentioned in providing some level of support and treatment services in Galway City. Statutory agencies include HSE, Saolta, Galway University Hospital, Tusla, City East Family Services, North Galway Family Services.

Voluntary organisations also provide some level of Support and Treatment Services including Brothers of Charity, Galway Simon Community, COPE Galway, Homeless Services, Youth Reach and Ard Family Resource Centre.

## 4. ALCOHOL POLICY ACTIVITY

The HSE Environment Health Service (EHOs) has been integral in shaping legislation which forms part of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 and will have a key role in the implementation of the new Public Health Alcohol legislation. NUIG has developed an alcohol policy which is implemented and monitored, mostly focused on students.

GMIT refused the establishment of a college bar, so alcohol is not sold on campus.

They have a range of Education and Support Services in place and are currently developing a college alcohol policy.

## SUMMARY

The overall goal of the Galway City Alcohol Strategy is to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm, thereby making Galway City a more pleasant and safer place enabling a better quality of life for everyone.

The consultation process undertaken as part of the development of a new alcohol strategy highlights a number of issues that need to be addressed.

Respondents recognised that cheap and discounted alcohol is a real temptation with an oversupply of outlets selling alcohol, in particular off-licences.

Respondents recommended increasing the price of alcohol through minimum unit pricing and reducing the number of off-licences to ones that are alcohol off-licences shop only (not mixed retail).

Protecting children and young people from exposure to alcohol related harm was highlighted as an important issue with reference made to the journey and experience for a child in the environment of Galway City.

Engagement with the community is essential and there are many community groups and networks in Galway to work with in building greater community support.

The Galway City consultation has shone a light on the actions needed to promote and deliver on the Galway City Action Plan.

There is a strong foundation of awareness, insight and support for positive co-ordinated action.

The members of the Galway City Alcohol Forum can use these findings to work on the development of actions and build support and secure resources for the new Galway Alcohol Strategy.





## **Consultation on developing a new plan to reduce alcohol related problems in Galway City**

### **SUMMARY REPORT 2019**

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