

Evaluation of the Moseley Community Alcohol Partnership (MCAP)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EVALUATION OF THE MOSELEY COMMUNITY ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIP (MCAP) – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In May 2014 ABIC Ltd was commissioned by Birmingham City Council (BCC) to undertake an evaluation of the Moseley Community Alcohol Partnership (MCAP).

MCAP was a 2-year initiative to tackle historical problems with street drinking and associated aggressive begging and anti-social behaviour (ASB) within Moseley Village that were the cause of great concern and consternation to local residents, shoppers and traders.

The objectives of the MCAP, as stated in the bid to DCLG, were:

- To reduce harm to the local community caused by longstanding alcohol issues
- To deliver cultural change and positively challenge public perceptions
- To direct young or older? drinkers to appropriate local activity or services (holistic support)
- To create a sustainable approach that adds value

The initiative ran from June 2012 to June 2014 and was intended to build on existing enforcement activity organised by the BCC Safer Communities Team which took the form of an injunction under section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972 (s222).

The purpose of the evaluation is to address the following subject areas, which form the basis for the structure of this report:

- Project achievements
- Organisational and cultural change
- Community participation
- Governance and management
- Strategic impact
- Street drinkers' views
- Future of the MCAP

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The majority of stakeholders, residents, workers and business owners interviewed or surveyed for this consultation confirmed that the s222 injunction, combined with the wider support and partnership work of the MCAP, has made a significant and visible difference to life in Moseley Village.

The evaluation survey found that 47% of respondents felt there were '*far fewer*' street drinkers; nearly a quarter (23%) thought that there were '*fewer*'; and another 23% felt there were '*about the same number*'.

Additionally 47% said there were 'fewer' and 26% said 'many fewer' aggressive beggars in the area, whilst 19% thought there were 'about the same':

Responses to the BCC's s222 survey support these findings, with 84% saying they thought there were 'fewer street drinkers/beggars'.

The evaluation survey found that over half (58%) of respondents thought there was less general anti-social behaviour than before, including 17% who said there was 'much less', whilst 29% felt there was about the same amount.

In addition, half of the respondents felt that there was either 'less' (43%) or 'much less' (7%) alcohol related litter (e.g. bottles in the area), although 38% thought there was 'about the same amount'.

The evaluation survey results suggest that the MCAP has had a positive impact on respondents' confidence:

- 57% of respondents to the evaluation survey said they felt safer going out during the day (12% strongly agreed)
- 41% said they felt safer going out in the evening, whether it was light or dark (no 'strongly agree' responses)
- 26% said they felt safer going out after dark (2% strongly agreed)
- 43% now use local shops and facilities more than before (12% strongly agreed)
- 64% said that there are no longer any areas in Moseley Village they avoid (12% strongly agreed)
- 81% said that they felt the reputation of Moseley Village has improved (21%

There is evidence that the MCAP's work has had some positive impact on local businesses:

- 33% thought there were less street drinkers buying alcohol
- 20% thought that there was less anti-social behaviour related to street drinkers
- 40% had observed fewer arguments amongst street drinkers
- 40% thought that they/their staff had experienced less aggression from street drinkers

The Safer Communities Team (SCT) confirmed that support for street drinkers to address substance misuse and related problems has impacted positively on reoffending rates.

There was some anecdotal evidence which suggested that drinkers are however continuing to drink locally, albeit in much smaller numbers and/or that the problems may have moved indoors within some of the local social housing.

SIFA's statistics for their outreach work between August 2012 and June 2014 confirm that a total of 66 cases were referred to the organisation.

Of those 66 cases:

A total of 138 key working sessions were undertaken with existing/returning clients, which included:

- alcohol reduction advice
- accompanying the client to appointments
- assistance with money management
- accommodation advice
- general support/counselling

ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

There is substantial evidence from the evaluation that the joint approach by the local police officers and the SIFA outreach worker has played an important part in the success of the project.

For the local community, the issue was the need to bring about a change in their behaviour towards the street drinkers. Whilst local residents expressed their disapproval of, and disgust towards, the anti-social and aggressive behaviour of some street drinkers, there appears to have been a reluctance to report them to the authorities, even though some were said to be known by name:

The combined approach of using the s222 to prevent the street drinking, along with the outreach work to provide support for the individuals involved, appears to have been acceptable to residents as a method that deals with the problem without being unnecessarily punitive.

The Moseley Alternative Giving Campaign (MAGC) was developed by SIFA as part of the U Decide participative budgeting process, and launched on 8 May 2014. The rationale was to enable residents and visitors to Moseley Village to channel support towards the agencies working with them rather than giving to the street drinkers directly.

The July survey revealed that just over two thirds of respondents (65%) had heard of the MAGC. Of those who could recall, more were aware of it because they had seen the collecting tins than through campaign posters or leaflets.

In both surveys around two thirds of respondents (64% in April, 65% in July) indicated that they had never given to beggars in Moseley. For the remaining third that had:

- 14% said they had given money and 10% had given food in the April survey
- 21% had given money and 10% had given food in the July survey.
- Much smaller numbers of respondents (in both surveys) had given a cigarette, bus ticket or 'other'.

The July survey reveals that just over two thirds of respondents (69%) either had already given, or would give, to the Alternative Giving scheme. A further 18% said that they would give to the scheme *and* give to a beggar. Only 13% said they would not give at all.

In relation to the street drinkers themselves, those agencies and organisations participating in the evaluation were less optimistic that the project had brought about real and lasting change.

That said, it was acknowledged that there is real value in the agencies making contact with the street drinkers, enabling the former to *'keep an eye on them and stay in touch'*.

It is still early days to evaluate the impact of the project on the lives of the street drinkers.

Many professionals interviewed in the course of the evaluation referred to the fact that because their behaviour is based on dependency there is no *'quick fix'*. However, the fact that some drinkers are in touch with an agency such as SIFA may mean that, should they come to the point of seeking help to change, they know where to go.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Membership of the Board has not been as wide-ranging as anticipated in the original funding bid, and it was noted by one interviewee in particular that non-attendance by a representative of the General Housing department of a social housing provider may have led to a gap in understanding about accommodation-based issues.

A number of those interviewed through this evaluation referred to the difficulties in establishing clear governance for the MCAP in its early stages.

Specifically, the Board was seen as not having taken a sufficiently proactive role in clarifying its own terms of reference; the roles and responsibilities of partners; how the partnership should operate in practice; and ensuring that matters such as this evaluation and future sustainability were put on the agenda at the outset.

It was suggested that this had improved enormously with the appointment of the independent Chair, and in recent times meetings have been held every two months, with a structured agenda. One person expressed satisfaction that meetings now *'hold people to account'*.

The establishment of two sub groups (Enforcement and Support and Education, Enforcement and Communication) appears to have been useful in delivering the multi-agency working required by the project.

Management of the MCAP was not set out in the funding proposal, and no provision was made in the budget, presumably because at that stage it was envisaged that the project would be managed from the city council's own staffing resources.

However, BCC was operating under severe financial constraints and additional savings had meant that the project management of the MCAP could not be resourced. It is understood that DCLG was approached early in the first year with a request to amend the budget profile to include the cost of a co-ordinator and reassign £20,000 of the £28,000 originally assigned to Aquarius Outreach Plus to fund this role (with SIFA picking up the outreach role).

The picture that has emerged through the evaluation is one where, in the first year, the Coordinator did too much of the work himself, and did not focus sufficiently on empowering and coordinating the work of others.

However, it was widely acknowledged that the second year of the MCAP had seen substantial achievements, much as a result of there being a project manager more suited to the role. There is now a clear project plan with an associated budget, as envisaged in the original funding bid.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The BCC bid to DCLG to secure the funding for the MCAP made some bold commitments to involve the community in the project. Whilst ultimately the commitments set out by BCC in its bid to DCLG were broadly honoured, there was significant disappointment expressed by those community representatives interviewed about the first year of the MCAP.

The evaluators were advised that the community felt largely excluded in Year 1, which was also marked by an apparent lack of progress in terms of getting engagement and education activities up and running. It was also felt that there was a lack of communication with the community on the part of the original Project Co-ordinator.

It had been the original expectation of the community that the enforcement measures would be rolled-out in parallel with the education and engagement activity.

However, in the event, the s222 went live three months in advance of the initial outreach support activity provided by SIFA. According to community representatives, the s222 order was so successful in driving the majority of drinkers and beggars off the streets that, by the time the engagement and education activity was rolled out, the problem had become very much less visible and the broader community were less interested in the MCAP as a result.

In defence of BCC's decision to expedite the s222, it was pointed out that the 90 or so residents who attended a public meeting in February 2012 to discuss the problem, were in no mood for a 'softly-softly' approach:

Despite these concerns and criticisms, the MCAP has delivered some important outputs with respect to community participation.

Most notable of these was the Participatory Budgeting exercise that led to the commissioning of the four U Decide projects.

STRATEGIC IMPACT

Given that most of the engagement and education activity in Moseley has taken place in the second year (and even the last six months) it is rather early to assess MCAP's strategic impact.

Nevertheless, some of those interviewed in the course of the evaluation expressed optimism that not only would there be a legacy within Moseley, but that this might ripple out more widely across the city.

As has been noted earlier in this report, the approach of the police and their relationship with both the community and partner organisations have been critical to the success of the MCAP.

The Alternative Giving project was also seen as particularly successful, and an approach that has potential for other parts of the city with a problem of begging. The evaluation confirmed that it has already been introduced in the city centre.

STREET DRINKERS' VIEWS

From the SEGWEB s222 breach information provided, the evaluators were able to create a profile of the street drinkers active in Moseley Village during the currency of the MCAP.

Fifty three individuals were recorded as receiving injunctions on SEGWEB between July 2012 and July 2014, of which the majority were male (83%). The ages of the drinkers ranged from 23 to 68 years with the average age being 38 years.

Whilst disappointingly, only one street drinker was available for consultation, the evaluators are grateful to the Alcohol Recovery Practitioner at SIFA for their support in attempting to facilitate communication with street drinkers, and also for the provision of three case studies. These, in addition to the interview secured, have been used to offer some insight into the impact of the MCAP on the Moseley street drinkers.

The case studies appear to support national research findings that street drinkers often present with multiple needs and health problems¹ which has a number of implications for the MCAP initiative:

- The fact that drinkers' problematic behaviour is developed over a long period and is often entrenched by the time they come to the notice of the authorities suggests that the MCAP should not expect dramatic changes or quick improvements in this regard.
- Research suggests that people who demonstrate addictive behaviour may never choose to change. However, if they do make that decision it is critical for support agencies to be on hand and in touch to support that decision. The strength of the MCAP model (i.e. the signposting to SIFA etc.) therefore is the establishment of contact links with drinkers and the potential for someone to be available if/when the drinker decides to make a change to their behaviour.
- It should not be assumed from the success so far achieved that the problem has been dealt with for all time. It is clear from these case studies and confirmed by some of those interviewed, that the drinkers are still drinking, some to a lesser degree and all in alternative venues, but the potential for them to return to Moseley remains. At the MCAP Board meeting in June, it was also reported that local publicans were experienced problems with aggressive begging in the early hours of the morning when the neighbourhood police team or Neighbourhood Wardens are not patrolling.

¹ Source - Street Drinking in Hounslow (2005)

- The multiple needs that lie behind the presenting drinking behaviour in many cases suggest that the MCAP might benefit from involvement with (or inclusion in) the city-wide *Supporting People with Multiple and Complex Needs* initiative which is a £10 million programme designed to ensure the most vulnerable individuals in the city are identified and supported through a network of provider agencies and a team of Lead Workers.

FUTURE OF THE MCAP

In conducting the evaluation it became clear that there was a strong desire amongst all parties to the MCAP to see the initiative continue in some form. In particular it was seen as important to maintain the following key activities:

- I. Enforcement powers and the publicising of these so that residents, traders and street drinkers are aware of their continuation
- II. The Alternative Giving Campaign, especially the donation boxes
- III. The outreach support function currently provided by SIFA
- IV. The inter-agency cooperation and communication, especially between the police and the other agencies

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation has assessed the MCAP's performance and achievements against its four stated objectives.

1. *To reduce harm to the local community caused by longstanding alcohol issues:* - Whilst there is a limited amount of quantitative data available to show how the s222 injunction impacted on the problem, the commonly shared view amongst the community, stakeholders and partners to the initiative is that Moseley has been transformed by the MCAP.
2. *To deliver cultural change and positively challenge public perceptions:* - It is similarly clear that the initiative has been effective at changing attitudes and behaviours amongst residents and traders, who now understand why their misplaced generosity in the past was fuelling the problem and who also now appear to be willing to respond to that through the MAGC.
3. *To direct young or old drinkers to appropriate local activity or services:* - The MCAP has succeeded in creating a mechanism for identifying street drinkers to support agencies with 66 individuals being put in touch with SIFA who would otherwise not have been contacted at all.
4. *To create a sustainable approach that adds value:* - The original bid submitted by BCC to the DCLG suggests that the plan for sustainability was to ensure strong community support from the inception of the MCAP which would then engender a commitment amongst the community to carry on the initiative in a voluntary capacity.

Unfortunately, as has been detailed earlier in this report, the community felt disconnected and excluded from the MCAP in Year 1 and arguably only became a substantive feature of the initiative when the Participatory Budgeting exercise was finally commenced as late as January 2014. Moreover, in the absence of comprehensive baseline and other data that would allow for a more quantitative assessment of the impact of the MCAP, it is difficult to be definitive about whether the initiative represents good value for money or not.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

The evaluators would wish to highlight the following key learning points from the MCAP experience for any future similar initiative:

- The importance of including the costs of a project manager in any budget.
- The need to get all partners involved at the bidding stage so that each can make an assessment of the contribution their agency will need to make and ensure that it is adequately costed.
- The importance of having an independent Chair in any Ward level project in post from the outset (i.e. where there may be local politics); someone who can command the respect of agencies and the local community.
- The value of having regular, structured steering group meetings for proper accountability from the outset.
- The value of having a project management approach, including having SMART targets and an action plan that is agreed to by all, with clear actions, responsibilities, and timetable.
- The value of having monitoring and evaluation systems in place from the outset, to be sure that everyone is clear about what success will look like and how it will be measured.
- The importance of publicity to ensure that the community – residents, workers and business owners – are aware of what is being planned and are aware how they can contribute to it.
- The value of the combined approach of enforcement, support and education.
- The need to anticipate the risks of the problem re-emerging or re-surfing, especially during the summer months and plan a costed response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the key learning points set out above are noted.
2. That urgent consideration is given to the continued provision of the key elements of the MCAP including securing any short term funding necessary.
3. That a longer term funding strategy is developed and enacted.
4. That the MCAP Board continues to meet and act as the governance structure for the initiative, pending confirmation as to which forum will fulfil that role in future.
5. That the MCDT is appointed as co-ordinator of the MCAP going forward.
6. That early contact is made with the Birmingham Changing Futures Together initiative to discuss the links between it and the MCAP.
7. That early contact is made with the Community Alcohol Partnerships CIC to discuss the potential and value of the MCAP becoming a member.