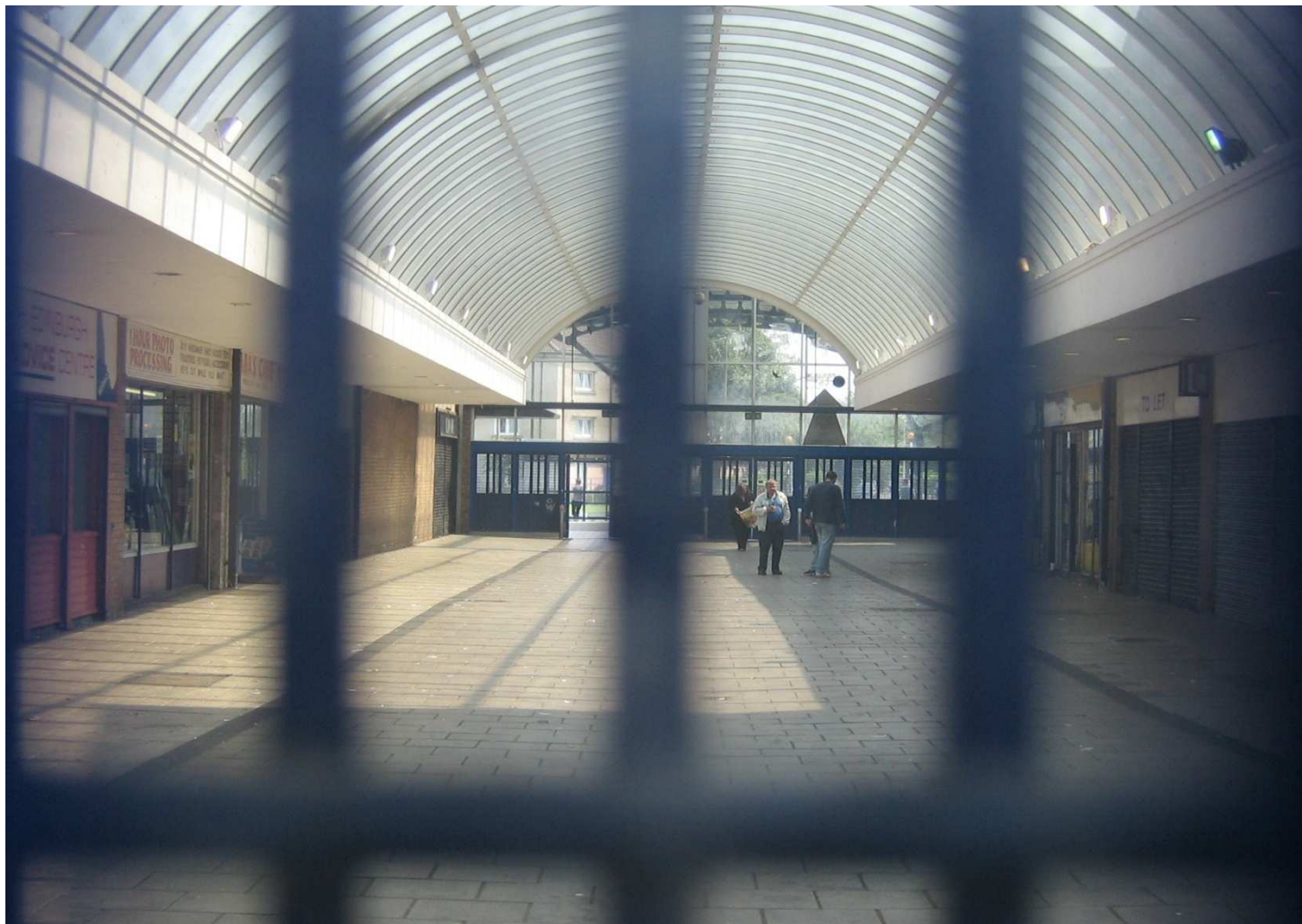


Muirhouse Youth Street Drinking in Focus



This summary presents the findings of a consultation with young people in Muirhouse exploring their views, attitudes and experiences of street drinking. Using a Streetwork methodology in order to gain the most representative sample of young people in Muirhouse, the survey was carried out in 2010-2011. The results reveal that young people in Muirhouse have a varied attitude towards street drinking, many preferring not to actively engage with the phenomena. A significant number of young people however see drinking every weekend as “normal”, and the biggest risk as being getting caught by parents or the police. The survey also produced results which show an increasing trend towards young women actively engaging in street drinking. Alcohol and in particular street drinking could lead to incidents of anti-social behaviour particularly near to the shops and the shopping centre. Young people in Muirhouse were relatively easy to engage with though this was not the perception of others.

What do young people in Muirhouse think about street drinking in their area?

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This survey was carried out by a team of Street-workers from North Edinburgh Street-work and Alcohol Development Workers from The Junction and funded by Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Comic Relief. No expectations were raised in the consultation and the partner organisations adhered to the strictest ethical standards of engagement.

August 2011

Introduction

Muirhouse ([*Scots: Muirhoose*](#)) is a district in [Edinburgh](#), the capital of [Scotland](#). It is west of [Granton](#) and the housing estates of [East Pilton](#) and [West Pilton](#), and East of [Davidsons Mains](#). It is bounded to the south by [Ferry Road](#) and to the East by Pennywell Road.

The name Muirhouse originally referred to a mansion built on Marine Drive in 1832 for the Davidson family, who were wealthy merchants trading in Rotterdam. The modern residential area of Muirhouse was built in the 1950s as a [council estate](#), though since the mid-1980s some of the housing has also been privately owned.

The predominant feature of the area is the 22 story tower block Martello Court, which accommodates 88 flats. Other high rise blocks in the area include Birnies Court, Fidra Court, Gunnet Court and Inchmickery Court amongst others.

The area is generally regarded as one of the more deprived districts of Edinburgh, with anti-social behavior and drug use major problems. However in recent years major redevelopment of the area has started. Martello Court, which was once seen as the centre of Muirhouse's social problems has been refurbished and now affords a better reputation. Much of the area's low-midrise housing has been, or is set to be demolished as part of the City Council's plan to provide 1100 new council houses in some of the city's most deprived estates. The Muirhouse Housing Association is involved in redevelopment work.

Craigroyston Community High School is a secondary comprehensive school located in Muirhouse on Pennywell Road. The main churches are St Andrew's Church (Muirhouse parish church) a [Church of](#)

Muirhouse Youth: Street Drinking in Focus

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[Scotland](#) "church extension" charge, and St Paul's Church, a Roman Catholic congregation with connections to the [Silesians of Don Bosco](#).

North Edinburgh Street-work initiative is a discrete franchise of Granton Youth Centre Ltd. and currently deploys 4 street-work teams across North Edinburgh in the districts of Trinity, Muirhouse, Pilton and Granton. NES finds it useful to make the following distinction for the benefit of those who do not fully grasp the definition of street-work

“Outreach work is part of most youth workers’ jobs. Most paid staff who work in buildings have an area/locality brief. Many workers do some outreach in the community to encourage young people to take part in the groups and activities taking place in the centres, and to use the services on offer.”

“Street-work differs from outreach work in that workers and young people recognise that coming in to a centre may not be immediately appropriate so they choose to build relationships and plan work outside in the community.”

Street-work (or sometimes known as detached work) can be an important part of a comprehensive youth work strategy, and should not be seen as a ‘knee jerk’ response to political or social pressure, be it concern about crime figures, drugs or other disturbance (although it is often more effective in making contact, forming relationships and addressing the behaviour of some of the disaffected young people involved in such issues). It is complementary to other approaches, including centre based provision, project work and outreach work, and a method of providing social education to young people who may not otherwise have access to youth services.

The underlying principles and philosophy of street-work are to accept young people as they are. Young people who gather on street corners etc. are often viewed as a threat to the community or at risk to themselves. Detached work does not label or judge in this way – workers do not condemn young people because of their behaviour, but they do not condone it either, and will constructively challenge young people about their behaviour, attitudes and perception of self and others.

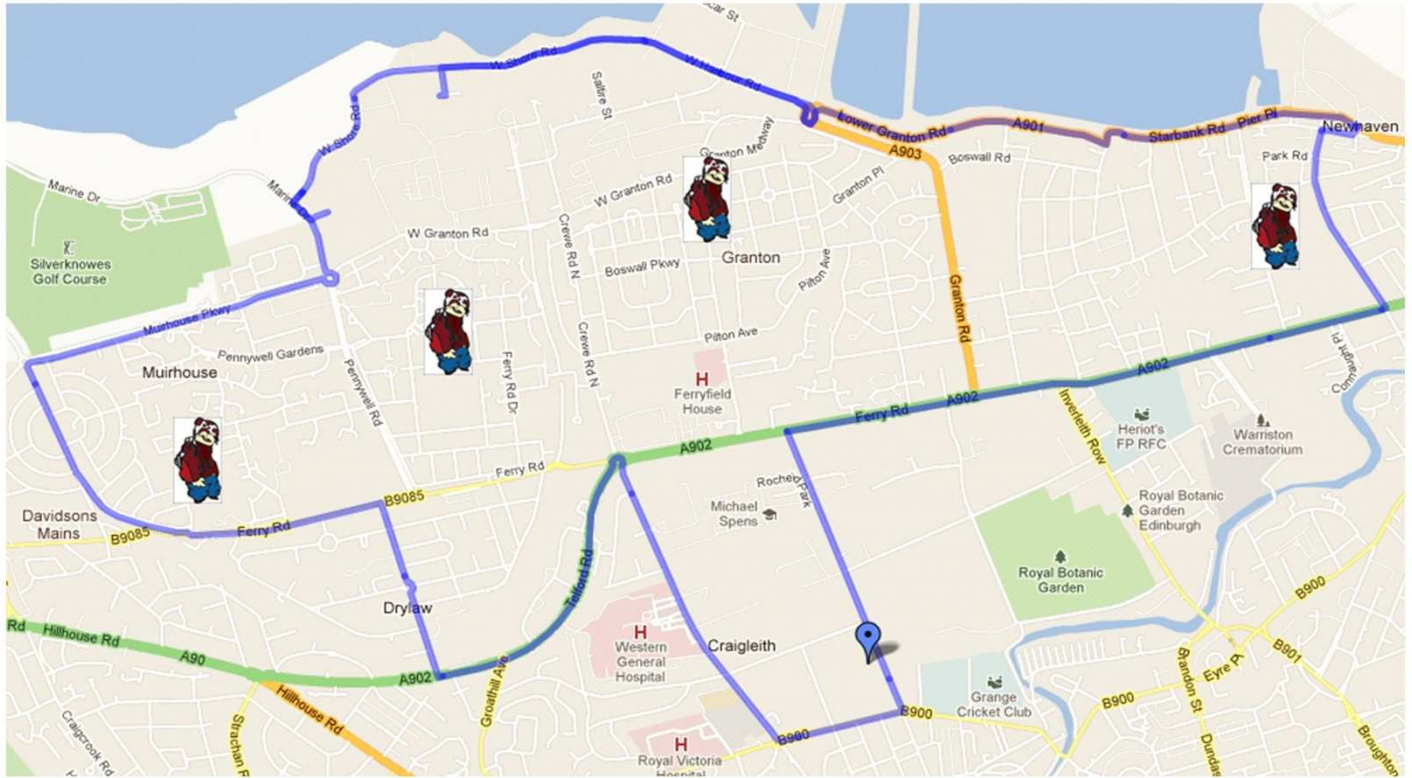
The basis of the relationship between worker and young people is mutual acceptance and parity – a negotiated relationship in which traditional notions of adult power and authority play no part. This makes it a very good tool for engaging with young people and getting open honest responses from them.

Street-work in North Edinburgh

North Edinburgh Street-work team deliver 2 units of Street-work per week across the four areas that make up north Edinburgh’s Forth Ward. The areas include Trinity, Pilton, Muirhouse and Granton. As part of the initial stages of the project, the four teams were engaged in establishing the young people’s perceptions and experiences of street-drinking. This established our baseline data which will later be used to measure the impact of the project and chart any potential changes in the attitudes and behaviour of Forth’s young street drinkers.

In Muirhouse the majority of young people surveyed were engaged with at or around the shopping centre, outside the shops, or near Millennium Park.

North Edinburgh Street-work - Area Coverage



The consultation

The consultation engaged with **77** young people aged 11-16 over a period of 6 weeks between 2010-2011. Of those young people **25** were male and **52** were female. **73** of those young people surveyed went to Craigryston High School, and the rest attended other local schools. All of the young people surveyed identified as coming from the Muirhouse district of North Edinburgh. **25** young people were aged 11-12, **26** young people were aged 13-14, **12** young people were 15, and **14** were aged 16.

Pattern of Young People's street drinking

Frequency of street drinking

A major theme that emerged from the consultation was that young people were often quite reluctant to engage with street drinking. **35** young people were emphatic about stating that they had never engaged with drinking outside, the vast majority being in the younger age groups. **20** occasionally engaged in street drinking and **10** reported that it was a frequent act, with at least **5** young people reporting street drinking as a weekly phenomenon.

Perceptions of street drinking

Opinion was divided into positive and negative reasons for street drinking. The overwhelming majority of those who *admitted* engaging in outdoor drinking were positive. Also much of their opinion was shaped by attitudes to friendships and developing relationships with peers.

11 young people positively identified street drinking as being with friends which was a “cool” thing. Many made reference to not being allowed or able to drink at home, where the watchful gaze of parents was problematic for them.

“it's good to meet with mates n that – I'm not allowed to drink at home, so we have to go out” 14 year old girl

Many of the younger people surveyed associated drinking with problems and bad feelings. When asked why they thought other young people may be drinking outside they would respond by saying;

“because they are angry” 11 year old girl

“maybe there had been a death in the family” 11 year old girl

Older young people who didn't drink in the streets associated the group that did as being hard-core and frightening;

“because they think they're pure mental” 14 year old girl

“they act all hard” 15 year old girl

Many young people made reference to the fact that there seemed little to do in the area, or that they were bored and met on the streets to drink and be sociable (in fact the same reasons that adults might report on the reasons why they drink).

Young people who did engage in regular street drinking did so regularly and for largely sociable reasons. They did not perceive themselves as having problems.

Access to Youth Provision

23 young people did not/had not accessed any youth provision. **36** had accessed or had accessed youth provision in the past, with the majority identifying Muirhouse Youth Development Group (MYDG) **23**, and **5** identifying Pilton Youth and Children's Project, and a few naming sports groups/classes etc. **28** were unsure of the question or didn't know.

There were no significant differences between access to provision and street-drinkers and non street-drinkers, and therefore no conclusions can be drawn.

Young People's Perception of the risks of street drinking

The survey revealed a distinctive split in the perception of the risks of street drinking.

Young people actively engaging in street drinking saw the risks as predominantly about getting drunk and fighting (or more likely "getting battered") as well as a real fear of "being caught" sometimes by parents but more often by the police.

Young people who were not engaging in street drinkers (often younger young people) were most likely to think of health risks as being a problem, and sometimes this was occasionally both pessimistic and over the top;

"they'll have a horrible life in the future" Young girl aged 12

"your liver could collapse" young boy aged 11

Other frequently cited risks were about the frequency and severity of accidents increasing (**13**). Young women in particular were anxious about the increase in the risk of rape and sexual assault (**7**). Other risks were about the risk to personal safety from others including "arseholes" and "peados".

Young People's views on how to reduce risks

Again the survey revealed a compelling split in views about reducing the risks of street drinking with the (predominantly younger) non street drinkers being much more vehement about not drinking and espousing a "just say no" approach to risk reduction.

"make it illegal for anyone under 21" 12 year old girl

Also increasing enforcement was popular with this group

"more police and cameras" 12 year old boy

And even more likely, a straightforward "don't drink" (**9**).

On the other hand, many of the cohorts, particularly those who admitted to occasional or frequent street drinking had a keen sense of harm reduction with regard to risks. All spoke about being amongst friends and watching out for each other. The two most popular responses from this group was about "drinking less" (though not stopping altogether) as well as not "drinking outside" (though this would beg the question of, if not outside then where?)

Young People's Alcohol Consumption

The cohort sampled had a wide ranging experience of drinking alcohol. Some drank often and frequently whilst reassuringly the majority of young people drank very occasionally (<45) or never (<20). About **10** young people indicated that they drank frequently and had a high regular consumption (<20 units).

The most popular drinks included; **vodka, cider, lambrini, wkd, and lager.**

Often young people reported on combining their drinks especially with vodka, which was the most popular drink of choice.

When asked about the most they had ever drunk on a night out, some (<7) reported binge drinking huge quantities of alcohol. **5** stated that they couldn't remember! People were most likely to binge drink on vodka, beer and cider.

How young people think the Street-work team can help

Those young people who reported that they did not engage with street drinking were less likely to see or feel that the Street-work team was a really helpful or useful resource for them. Those who did report to frequent or occasional street drinking found that overall they valued the reassurance provided by the team. Some of the responses were very positive;

"They talk to people and sort things out"

"They watch out for people and protect the streets"

"they help stop me drinking"

Those that did not spend much time on the street felt that they had little need for street-work, or in fact any intervention.

Conclusions

Young people in in Muirhouse are flanked on three sides by areas of urban deprivation, and like many of their peers they fear violence and territorialism. However they are generally responsible, resourceful, and enthusiastic and seem keen to engage with street-workers and alcohol workers.

The results of the Muirhouse Youth: Street Drinking in Focus survey would seem to indicate that young people in Muirhouse drink for much the same reason as adults, to enjoy the company of friends and to be sociable. However there are a hard core of young people for whom binge drinking is a frequent and sometimes risky occurrence, and for this group of young people the street-work team provides a vital and valuable connection to the adult world for who many of these young people yearn to escape. The street-workers in turn have learned to respect the young people they work with and the need for “distance” in order to engage with them on their terms. The involvement of alcohol workers from the Junction has allowed us to deliver Alcohol Brief Interventions (ABIs) specifically targeted at young people, and customised for this work on the streets with young street drinkers.

The Street-work Team

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For further information

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