



CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER

Category: Healthcare Campaign

Company: Gardiner Richardson and Balance, the North East Alcohol Office

Entry title: What's the Harm?

Brief and objectives:

Starting a conversation with parents about the risks of drinking in childhood was the aim of Balance's new healthcare campaign.

It followed a regional commitment from the North East council's Directors of Public Health to support the vision of an "alcohol-free childhood" – for every child to have the best start in life.

Objectives:

- Increase parental knowledge of the dangers of children drinking
- Increase awareness of the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) guidelines
- Challenge myths around alcohol and children
- Provide information and resources for parents – and for professionals
- Help parents to delay the age of children drinking.

The idea, research and planning:

The campaign was grounded in evidence that drinking in childhood can lead to health problems, increase the likelihood of risky behaviour, impair performance at school, affect mental health and make becoming heavier drinkers as adults more likely.

The CMO guidance is that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option – with ideally no alcohol until age 18 and definitely not before 15.

More children today are choosing not to drink alcohol and the campaign is designed to support those decisions and encourage more of them.

Parents – the key audience for this campaign – can positively influence their children's alcohol use by maintaining a close relationship with them, establishing rules concerning alcohol and supervising their drinking.

Alcohol Awareness Week in November was identified as an ideal time to launch the campaign.

Research commissioned by Balance identified a lack of awareness around the CMO guidance for children and alcohol – with only one in 20 NE adults aware of it.

The research also highlighted some myths. Over half (54%) of adults thought the providing children with alcohol in a supervised situation would ensure they know how to handle drinking when they're older. The evidence actually shows that children whose parents allow them to drink are four times more likely to be a risky drinker – but three quarters of 14-15 year olds whose parents don't allow them to drink, choose not to.

Balance commissioned a series of focus groups in summer 2018 which found that many parents don't know what the right thing to do around alcohol and children is. There was a consensus that drinking at home is safer and more acceptable – a belief this will make children less likely to drink outside home, or to excess.

With a lot of mixed messages and plenty of myths to overcome, there was too much to tackle in just one campaign. It was agreed that What's the Harm? would be the first four-week-long phase of an ongoing programme of activity.

The idea was simple: create a parent to parent campaign reflecting alcohol's influence in their children's lives, in the knowledge that every parent wants the best for their child.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

A key element of the campaign was to have a conversation with parents. We needed to create engaging content which would appeal, without apportioning blame or judgement on their parenting. The aim was to grab attention, raise awareness and support.

We worked with Balance to develop a PR strategy to support the regional advertising of the campaign which featured radio and digital advertising highlighting the risks to children from drinking.

Tactics included:

- Digital

A microsite 'whatstheharm.co.uk' was created as a central 'hub' where parents could get evidence-based, need-to-know information. It featured the facts about alcohol, myth buster area with true/false questions and info on the pressures and risks young people face.

- Video

Video content was created, including real stories of a mum whose teenage daughter died as a result of drinking alcohol at a friend's New Year's Eve, a parent of a teenage boy, a GP and alcohol charity, to provide helpful advice for parents.

To bring the voices of young people to life, we filmed a group of North East secondary school pupils on their views about alcohol.

We also created a powerful film called 'Grounded: A 14-year-old's story' which anonymously featured the story of a young girl who ended up in hospital after drinking spirits with her friends, as well as an interview with a PC from Durham Constabulary who regularly sees the impact of underage drinking.

- Media relations

For the launch media relations package, findings from the recent Balance survey were used to create a stand-out news hook for national and regional media. The campaign gained national media interest from Denis Campbell at The Guardian, and subsequently ran in the Independent and Huffington Post.

- Social media

To support the campaign we developed a social media content calendar including case studies, infographics, conversation starters and facts and used the hashtag #WhatstheHarm.

- Stakeholder engagement

A toolkit for partners, including web copy, links to videos and social media posts, was created to provide information and materials to engage key stakeholders as advocates for the campaign.

Delivery:

What's the Harm was an integrated campaign involving Gardiner Richardson and Balance's creative agency, Robson Brown. The campaign launched during Alcohol Awareness Week in November 2018.

The following steps were taken to effectively deliver the campaign:

- Briefings and planning sessions – four months prior to launch
- Ongoing liaison in preparation for launch – regular meetings and calls to ensure activity stayed on track, drafting content for PR/case studies/digital and social media, filming/editing videos
- Launch – Alcohol Awareness Week – issuing/selling in embargoed press releases to target media and arranging interviews
- Social media – preparation of content calendar, posting, engaging with followers
- Campaign evaluation report.

Measurement and evaluation:

The campaign achieved:

- Widespread national and regional coverage including The Guardian, Independent, Huffington Post
- 10.7 million opportunities to see
- 23,000 visitors to the campaign website, 35,000 sessions and over 50,000 page views
- Total impressions (combined Facebook and Twitter): 1.3m
- Engagements (combined Facebook and Twitter): 3,056
- Link clicks (combined Facebook and Twitter): 12.3k.

Bluegrass evaluation of the campaign found:

- It reached a third of parents in the region
- Two thirds of people took action after seeing the campaign
- Caused around half of parents that saw it to think again about what alcohol to allow children and at what age.

Budget and campaign impact:

£6,000 PR Fees.

Due to the success of the campaign, it is set to run again in July 2019.