

Evaluation of a Pilot Programme for Reducing the Social Supply of Alcohol to Young People in Taranaki



*Report prepared for
Taranaki Alcohol Harm Reduction Group
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Executive Summary

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the pilot programme with caregivers/whānau of intermediate-aged students. To raise awareness about the benefits of delaying consumption of alcohol to young people aged under 18 years in Taranaki.

The findings for the evaluation report are based on:

- Use of ticketing data collected through Eventspronto software from three events featuring Nigel Latta as guest speaker and held on 11th and 12th May 2021.
- Feedback from parents and caregivers who attended Nigel Latta's presentation. This included a pre and post presentation on-line and paper-based survey.
- Summary of discussions of parent focus groups that were held following Nigel Latta's presentation.
- On-line survey to all participating schools.
- On-line survey to all parents who attended the parent focus groups.
- On-line survey to all core members of the project group.

Parent Attendance at the Nigel Latta Event

Nigel Latta, a presenter and producer of documentaries, TV parenting programmes and a registered psychologist, was contracted by Taranaki Alcohol Harm Reduction Group to deliver a presentation to parents and caregivers of intermediate-aged children. This presentation was delivered to three events attended by whānau of four intermediate schools in the New Plymouth District and conducted on 11th and 12th May 2021. Two events were conducted during the day and one was held at night. A total of 452 parents and caregivers attended the presentation.

The findings show there was a good turnout from parents of intermediate aged students to the events. The ethnic groups identified in the ticketing data generally reflect those in the New Plymouth District population. There was good attendance from Māori whānau, with 23% of those who attended identifying as Māori. In comparison, Māori comprise 17.8% of the New Plymouth District population.

Two out of the three schools Principals that hosted a Nigel Latta event rated parent attendance as 'very good' and the remaining school Principal rated parent attendance as 'poor'. The school Principal, who rated the parents' attendance as 'poor', stated those parents who did attend may not have been those who would have got the most benefit from the presentation. Strategies to attract parents who may be less likely to engage should be considered for future projects.

Changes in knowledge regarding the importance of delaying on-set of drinking

The findings from the pre and post presentation survey show the key message of 'no drinking under 15 years of age' was well communicated to parents and caregivers. The general age (for both pre and post surveys) respondents thought it was reasonable for young people to start drinking alcohol was much older (median age of 18 years of age).

There was a strong belief held by the respondents, pre-presentation, that you can teach your children to drink responsibly by giving them small sips from a young age (as young as 5 years of age) and supervising teenage drinking at home.

Just over half (54%) of the respondents in the post presentation survey stated that attending the Nigel Latta's presentation had changed their views regarding what was a reasonable age for young people to start drinking alcohol. The key reasons given for why they changed their views included to support brain development in their children, due to the cancer risk, and that their previous thinking about starting their children drinking early and teaching them to drink responsibly was wrong. These findings show the presentation was an effective way to communicate the benefits of delaying the on-set of drinking in young people to parents and caregivers.

For the remaining respondents, Nigel Latta's presentation confirmed 'what they already knew', with information gained from attending other talks, or was in-line with 'what they were already thinking'. Overall, these findings show the need to get the message out to more parents who are not already aware of the importance of delaying the on-set of drinking.

Overall, the performance rating for parent attendance and engagement for the Nigel Latta events was rated between 'very good' (as most of the school Principals rated parent attendance as 'very good'), and 'excellent' as the key message of 'no drinking under 15 years of age' was effectively communicated to parents and caregivers.

Engagement with schools

The majority (4 out of 6) of schools approached engaged in the pilot project. The remaining two schools declined to participate in the pilot project due to having 'too much on'. For the four schools that did participate, all felt the information provided about the pilot project was clear and informative and they were able to use the information provided by the project staff to promote the Nigel Latta presentation to parents and caregivers through their school newsletter. All school Principals would recommend the project being extended to a wide range of other schools.

The three schools who were responsible for the hosting the Nigel Latta events all reported the events were well run and organised.

Overall, the performance rating for engagement with school was rated between 'good' as most of the schools approached engaged in the pilot project, and 'excellent' in terms of provision of information and organisation of Nigel Latta event.

Use of parent focus groups

The two main ways participants signed up for the parent focus groups was either straight after the presentation or via the online post presentation survey. Most of the parents were able to attend both focus groups. While there was generally good participation, having the second focus group delivered using the zoom on-line platform (due to a Covid-19 alert level change) did cause some communication challenges for participants. While males and participants who identified as Māori were present in the parent focus groups, the majority of participants were female and Non-Māori. In order to privilege the voices of males and Māori it is suggested that extra focus groups are considered in future projects i.e. Māori/Non-Māori and offer a separate focus group for males.

The majority of the participants felt the parent focus groups were a good way to co-design messages and strategies about delaying the onset of drinking. The key reasons given included value in gaining different perspectives and that it was a good method for developing good ideas. A few participants felt there could have been more action or progress.

A survey conducted with participants from the parent focus groups conducted 11 months after the initial Nigel Latta event, found that all respondents had talked to others about the information they had received from attending the Nigel Latta event and parent focus groups. Nearly all parent focus participants had made changes in their whānau/family as a result of being in the parent focus group. These included increased communication/discussions about alcohol within their whānau/family and making changes to either their own consumption of alcohol (in general or in front of their children) and/or to the way alcohol was used/treated in the house. It is noted that parents reviewing their own alcohol use was not a key aim of this project but can be considered as a positive unintended outcome. Actions such as moving alcohol out of sight of their children helps to de-normalisation alcohol in their children's lives.

Focus group parents were keen to have continued involvement in the project. It was suggested that two focus groups were not enough to form connections with other parents (that they did not already know) and an additional focus group may be required. Findings from the longer-term survey showed that parents were keen to be kept informed and half of the respondents would be interested in attending a further focus group.

Overall, the performance rating for parent focus group for 'good' regarding diversity in the groups and 'very good' in terms of attending both groups and seeing it as a positive and worthwhile activity.

Way forward

All paid and unpaid project staff respondents suggested continuing with the project and implementing in other schools and communities. It was evident that the project has been supported by a core group of paid and unpaid project staff from a range of organisations who are committed to the delivery of the project. The key weakness, highlighted by project staff, was the limited reach of the programme beyond the pilot schools. Project staff identified the need to go beyond the school community and engage with community leaders to increase the reach of the project, particularly in reaching whānau Māori.

Project staff respondents were mindful that the message around delaying on-set of drinking in young people was a difficult one to convey in an environment which supports and normalizes

drinking alcohol. It was suggested that a social marketing campaign based on key messages regarding the benefits delaying on-set of drinking, generated by community level engagement, would be helpful, e.g. billboards and posters for sports clubs etc.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this report it is recommended that the Taranaki Alcohol Harm Reduction Group :

1. Hold another parent focus group to share the findings of this evaluation.
2. Continues with the project.
3. Apply for further funding to extend the project to other schools and communities.
4. Investigates ways to increase the reach of the programme beyond the school community by engaging with community leaders to increase the reach of the project, particularly in reaching whānau Māori.
5. Communicates with participants in parent focus groups by sending regular project updates.
6. Increases the number of parent focus groups to ensure there is adequate time for parents to form connections with one another.
7. Consider having separate focus groups targeting males and Māori.
8. Explores the possibility of a funded social marketing campaign promoting the benefits of delaying the on-set of drinking in young people in Taranaki with Te Hiringa Hauora.

