

Community-based multi-component programme in Finland

The PAKKA Project, Finland

In Finland, the Finnish Alcohol Act prohibits the sale of alcohol to intoxicated patrons, with the alcohol server being responsible for compliance. Despite this, there is an acceptable culture of drinking and intoxication. The Local Alcohol Policy (PAKKA) project was conducted between 2004 and 2007, developing multi-component community interventions to reduce the number of sales to intoxicated individuals and subsequent alcohol-related violence and injuries that occur.



The town of Jyväskylä was chosen as the project area because of policies and groups interested in community interventions, and a sufficiently large population. A coordinator was appointed to organise the planning and implementation of the interventions; supported by a local multi-agency steering group and a working group that developed the interventions. The groups had representatives from: the alcohol licensing authorities; the police; prevention workers; the alcohol serving industry; municipal leaders; the university; and the media. PAKKA consisted of the following components in the project area:

- Enforcement activity by the district-level liquor licensing authorities was increased, with more mild sanctions (written reprimands and counselling) given.
- A half-day training programme provided information on alcohol laws and responsible alcohol serving skills. The training targeted alcohol servers in the intervention establishments with attendance being voluntary.
- Campaigns were conducted to reinforce policies regarding alcohol service and consumption. For example, the university opening carnival challenges students to have a drink in every downtown bar. The project encouraged the drinking premises and the student body to allow non-alcohol drinks to be included. In another campaign a prize was given to the most responsible bar.
- Community mobilisation attempted to raise awareness of alcohol-related problems amongst the public. This was supported and advertised by media coverage.
- Heightened communication between the coordinator, the research team and the stakeholders via seminars highlighting the consequences of over-serving, regular meetings and feedback of research results.

In the evaluation, all establishments in the intervention and a control area were tested for their refusal of service to a pseudo-drunk customer (an actor pretending to be intoxicated attempting to purchase an alcoholic drink). Refusal of service in the intervention area increased from 23% of the premises in 2004 to 42% in the follow-up two years later. In comparison, refusal of service to the pseudo-drunk customer in the control area decreased from 36% to 27%. The difference between the intervention and the control was statistically significant at follow-up. Overall, denial of service was highest in downtown bars, but the largest change in rates of refusal was for suburban premises. However, the project was not effective in encouraging servers to refuse supplying alcohol to intoxicated customers in nightclubs.¹

1. Warpenius K, Holmila M, Mustonen H. Effects of a community intervention to reduce the serving of alcohol to intoxicated patrons. *Addiction* 2010, 105: 1032-1040