



Consultation on Police Powers to Search Children and Young People for Alcohol

Written Evidence from YouthLink Scotland

June 2016

About YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of our sector.

Scotland's youth work sector is as rich and diverse as the nation itself. Our sector has a workforce in excess of 80,000 – including over 75,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. The youth work sector work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

The activity, venue, and approaches utilised to deliver this are varied – and include youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation.

YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

About this Response

This response is made on behalf of the youth work sector and our membership. This response is informed by information gathered at our YouthLink Scotland Members Network. This response does not claim to be the position of any one individual member or of all member organisations. Individual member organisations may hold views which differ from the perspectives presented here. This is not the response of young people, but of youth work professionals who work with and for young people.

Consultation Questions

- 1. Do you think that a new power for the police to search a child or young person for alcohol as outlined in Part 1 of this consultation paper is an appropriate way to reduce risks to safety and wellbeing caused by possessing and consuming alcohol in public?**

NO –

YouthLink Scotland does not support the belief that new powers for the police to search a child or young person for alcohol are required.

The consultation paper does not address how these powers interact with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We would welcome a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment being carried out on this proposal.

With the negative experiences of stop and search still fresh in the minds of young people, their parents and youth work practitioners – there is little support for further powers to stop and search children and young people.

The youth work sector is concerned about how police would use this power, and what grounds or intelligence they would consider appropriate to stop and search a young person – that they do not already have with the power to seize alcohol within the 1997 Act.

There is a genuine concern amongst youth work practitioners that specific groups of young people are much more likely to be targeted for stop and search than others, should this new power be approved. It is perceived that young people in the most deprived areas are more likely to be subjected to these new powers than in affluent areas.

The consultation paper does not adequately address how these powers would be monitored to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against specific groups of or individual children and young people.

The youth work sector would much prefer investment in preventative interventions, including youth work approaches which would allow safe space and environment for young people to learn about and develop alternative perspectives and attitudes towards possessing and consuming alcohol.

Should new powers be enacted, investment in youth work will be required to support young people to explore their rights and to understand what police powers are in place. We believe that this is an area of knowledge which is underdeveloped in young people, and as a result adds to the power differential between young people and the police.

Further action should be taken to increase strategies to target and prosecute retailers for supplying alcohol to young people or to those believed to be purchasing on young people's behalf.

2. Do you think that any negative effects could result from a new power to search a child or young person for alcohol as outline in Part 1 of this consultation paper?

YES –

YouthLink Scotland believes that this new power would damage the relationship between young people and the police. Resulting in young people feeling victimised, by a new power which targets them as a population specifically. This is particularly concerning in light of the data included in the consultation document which states that only 1 in 10 stop and search resulted in the discovery of alcohol.

With significant positive efforts in recent years to improve young people/police relationships, including the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, we are concerned that having a power which specifically targets young people is a detrimental step for Scottish society.

There is of course a risk to the wellbeing of children and young people by their possession and consumption of alcohol – but we do believe that the current powers to seize alcohol are adequate in meeting this need.

3. Do you think that a new power for the police to search a person suspected of supplying a child with alcohol as outlined in Part 1 of this consultation paper is an appropriate method to reduce risk to safety and wellbeing caused by possessing and consuming alcohol in public?

YES –

We believe that this power is appropriate if the individual is over the age of 18 and would add to the deterrent to supply alcohol to children and young people. However it is not clear within the consultation document if this power adequately exists within the statutory powers to stop and search or through the seizure of alcohol.

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