

Discussing Drugs and Alcohol with Young People

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Background

Almost three quarters of young people in Highland have consumed alcohol by the age of fifteen. Although there has been a 10% reduction since 2010, Highland remains above the national average. Drug use among adolescents in Highland has also shown a downward trend¹. However, most research is conducted with young people that regularly attend school and as such may not include the experience of more vulnerable young people.

There is substantial evidence supporting brief interventions for alcohol^{2,3} and growing evidence of effectiveness for other substances^{4,5}. Additionally, evidence supports the feasibility of delivering alcohol brief interventions to young people^{6,7}.

In response, a *Discussing Drugs and Alcohol with Young People* training course was designed by NHS Highland Health Improvement in conjunction with Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. The course allows practitioners to develop skills in raising the issue of drug and alcohol use, and have short, effective conversations about behaviour change.

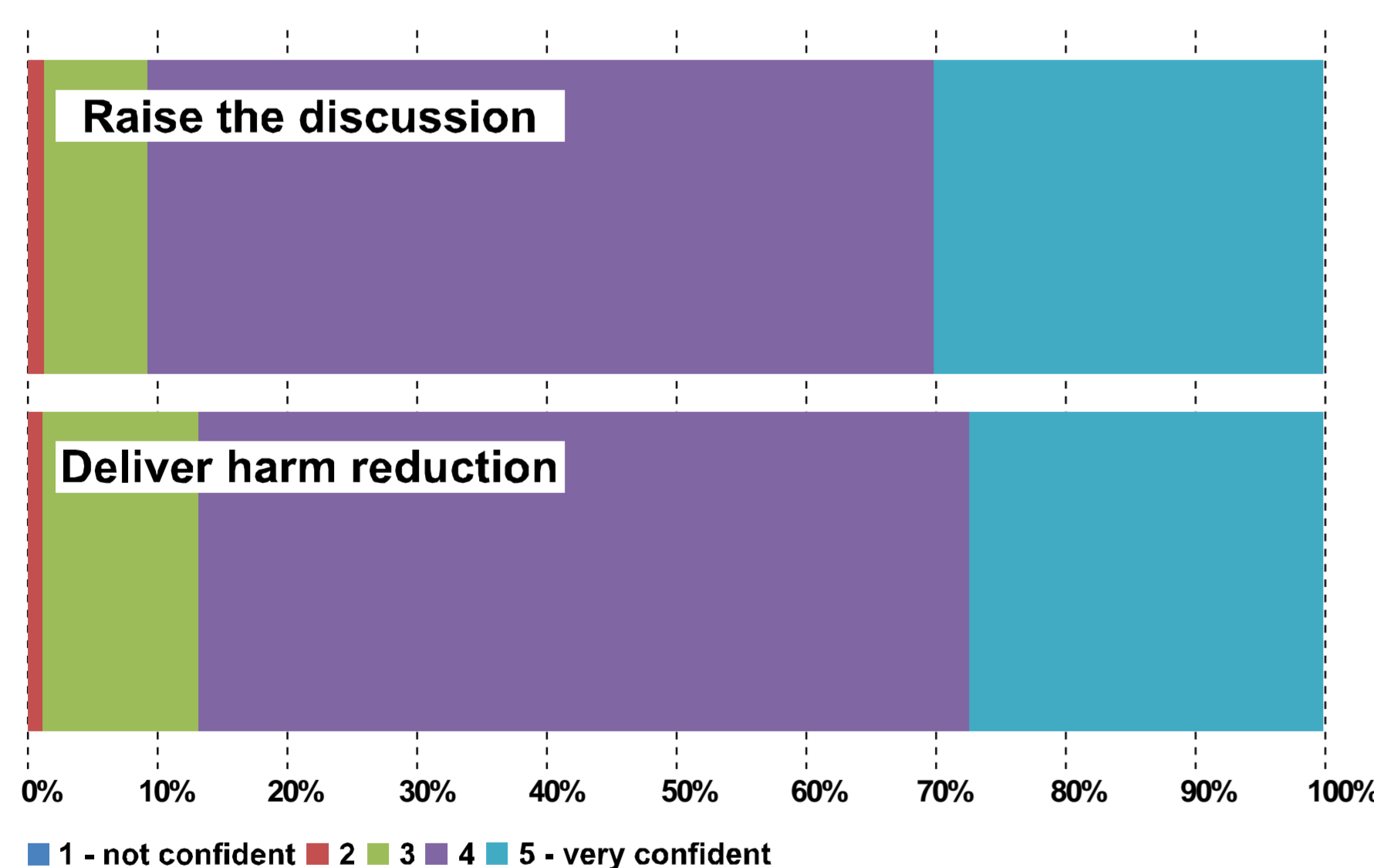
Methods

Materials were developed, creating a blended learning course composed of two briefing papers and a 4 hour face-to-face group training session. A training network was established, recruiting members from NHS Highland, Highland Council (Health Improvement & Youth Action Team), Highlife Highland, and Action for Children to reach those working directly with young people, while covering the NHS Highland area. Immediately following training, participants completed an evaluation form containing quantitative and qualitative questions. Completed forms were evaluated.

Results

During 2016/2017, 20 training sessions with over 200 participants were completed. The course evaluated positively, both in quantitative and qualitative feedback.

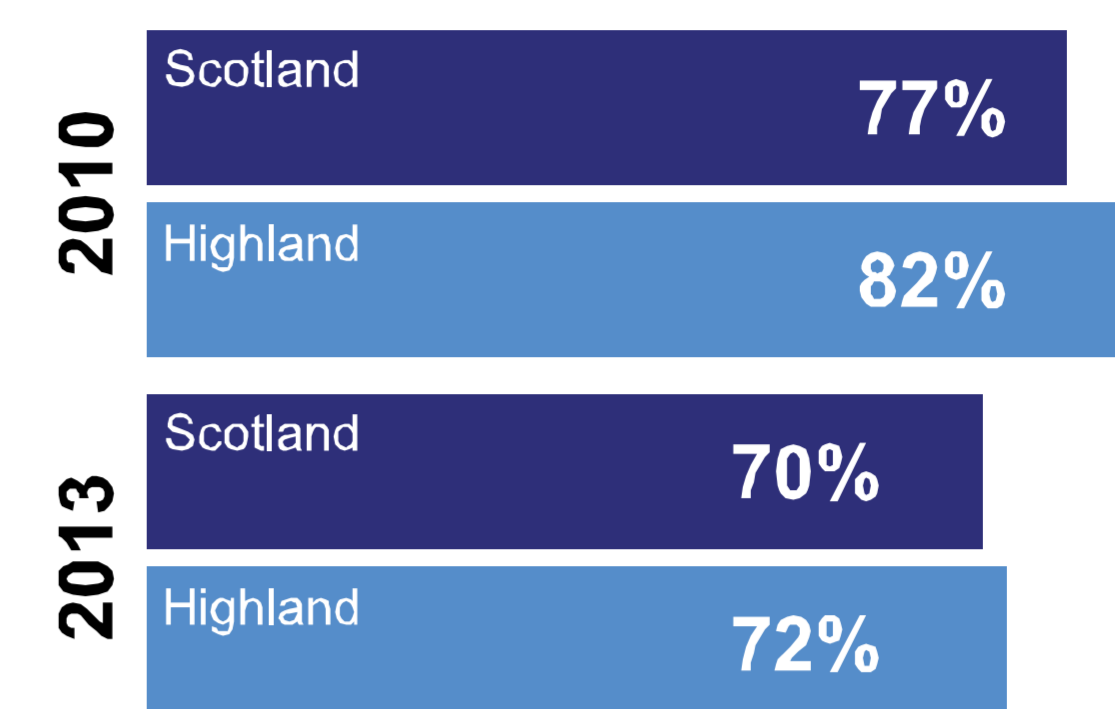
- 91% of participants reported feeling confident or very confident to raise the discussion about drugs and alcohol as an issue.
- 86% of participants reported feeling confident or very confident in delivering a harm reduction approach in relation to drugs and alcohol.



"Really spot on course, thank you, I have a lot more appropriate information to give to our young people now"

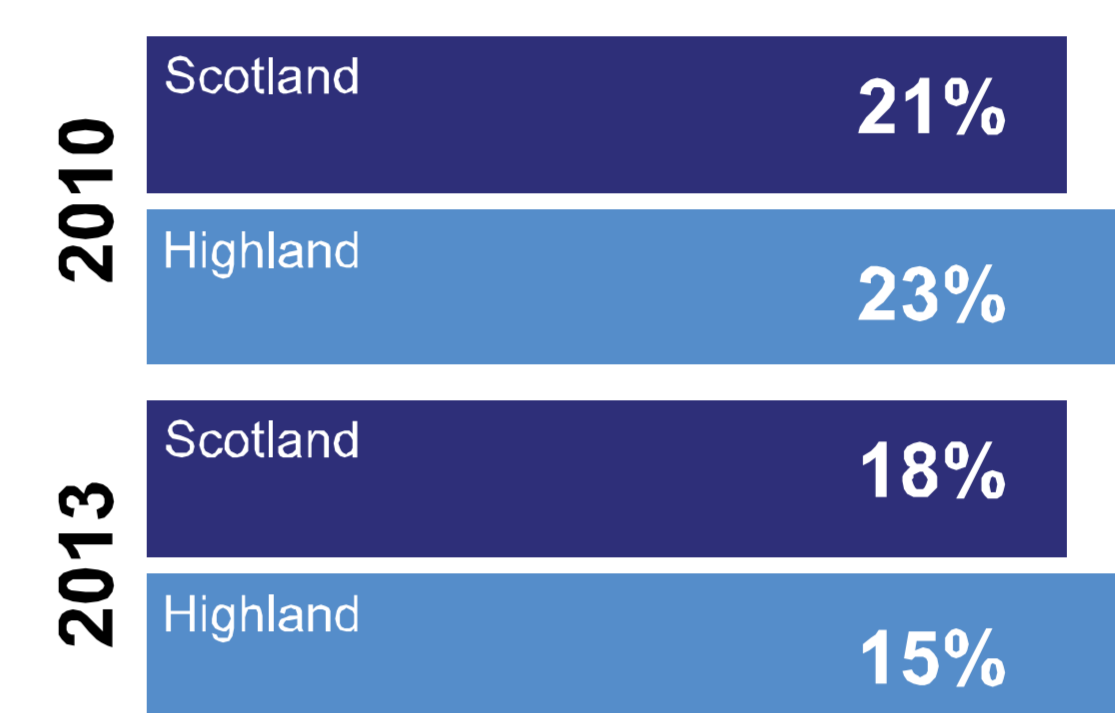
"The structure of the course was excellent, a proper beginning, middle and end, lots of interaction and participation and opportunities to practice"

Ever had an alcoholic drink?



Almost three quarters of young people have drunk alcohol by the age of 15

Ever used drugs?



Almost one fifth of young people report having used drugs by the age of 15



Input from a training session in Wick, 2016

Conclusions

- Demand from practitioners working directly with young people demonstrates a clear need for the course
- Evaluation was very positive overall
- Continued evaluation into the impact of the training will provide additional insight to the approach being put into practice.
- A further development has been the creation of a series of example scenario videos

Future Developments



Tobacco smoking is a behaviour that most commonly begins at a young age⁸. Evidence exists supporting brief interventions for smoking⁹. Therefore, the topic of tobacco will be added into the course content, both in the briefing papers and within the face-to-face component.

References

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