


# Impact of Alcohol

## What we have learned so far

**£13 million** invested to reduce the harm to individuals, families and communities directly affected by alcohol misuse

**Programme overview and reach**

<p><b>Key dates</b></p> <p><b>2010</b> Launch of programme</p> <p><b>2012</b> H&amp;SCT projects funded</p> <p>NI wide projects funded and development &amp; support contract awarded to NICVA and CES</p> <p><b>2013</b> NI wide projects funded and development &amp; support contract awarded to NICVA and CES</p> <p><b>2015</b> Additional funding of £2.05m</p> <p><b>2017</b> NICVA and CES conferences</p>	 <p><b>31</b> projects</p>	<p><b>27</b> H&amp;SCT projects</p> <p><b>4</b> NI-wide projects</p>	<p><b>Promotion &amp; prevention</b></p> <p>Awareness sessions, information sessions, resilience workshops, education courses, website development, practitioner training, employee and organisation training</p>				
<p><b>142,000+</b> people involved :</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>72,623</b> Adults</td> <td><b>12,000</b> Children &amp; young people</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>10,500</b> Pregnant women and unborn children</td> <td><b>9,800</b> Older people</td> </tr> </table>		<b>72,623</b> Adults	<b>12,000</b> Children & young people	<b>10,500</b> Pregnant women and unborn children	<b>9,800</b> Older people	<p><b>Treatment &amp; recovery</b></p> <p>Mentoring, home visits, care plans, counselling, self help, clinics, recovery garden, crisis response, therapeutic services, family support</p>	<p><b>280+</b> Community Champions trained</p> <p><b>130+</b> Community Champion organisations trained</p>
<b>72,623</b> Adults	<b>12,000</b> Children & young people						
<b>10,500</b> Pregnant women and unborn children	<b>9,800</b> Older people						
<p><b>3000+</b> families supported</p>							

**Key features of our grant making approach**

<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <p>Bringing together expertise Consistency Open and honest Early conversations</p>	<p><b>Flexibility</b></p> <p>Conversation over process Adapting in real time Recognising learning</p>	<p><b>Long term investment</b></p> <p>Development and support Recognising complexity Extension funding Guidance and support</p>
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**Key learning**

We have seen the value from this grant making approach and believe that some of the learning can inform other approaches including commissioning of services.

NI wide projects valued their relationships with the Fund, along with the flexibility offered and support through development grants and extension funding.

**Recommendations for future funding**

Recognise the complexity of alcohol related harm and the consequences for resourcing and impact measurement.

Building strong positive relationships and maintaining them is essential and central to effective partnerships. They enable open, honest conversations to address issues, share learning and network.

Everyone involved in a funding programme needs clear guidance about what the programme is trying to achieve.

When working across sectors consider the wider context and existing relationships in play.

## Background

Impact of Alcohol launched in December 2010 with the aim of ‘reducing the harm to individuals, families and communities directly affected by alcohol misuse’. At the time, we saw the potential of building relationships and networks to address alcohol-related harm in Northern Ireland. We developed a programme which had two strands: 1) Trust portfolios where services were delivered in partnership with the third sector and 2) Grants directly to third sector organisations to deliver on a more regional basis.

Through portfolio and project evaluations and the reports published by the Centre for Effective Services (CES),<sup>1</sup> there is a wealth of knowledge regarding specific interventions and the effective implementation of services which address alcohol-related harm. As a whole, these reports highlight the complexity of the issue of alcohol misuse in Northern Ireland and demonstrate how everyone in Northern Ireland has a relationship with alcohol, even if a person does not consume alcohol. In drawing together our learning, it was often referenced how alcohol is ‘part of the weekly shop’ and has a prominent role in local culture. We learned from these reports that over 142,000 people were involved in the Impact of Alcohol programme in various ways including one-to-one support, training, mentoring or even accessing online resources.

This document outlines some of the Fund’s key learning from the programme, in relation to delivery through grants. By focusing on grant making, we considered the impact our approach had on organisations and how a National Lottery grant supported them to test out new approaches and iterate processes to change perspectives on the complexity of alcohol misuse.

With the development of a new Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Framework, there is a unique opportunity for learning from this report to support the development of funding mechanisms to reduce the number of alcohol-related deaths and alcohol-related incidents in Northern Ireland. In doing so, there is also an opportunity to ensure that the legacy of the Impact of Alcohol programme is embedded into the health system.

## Grant Making

To gather our learning, we started by reflecting on what exactly our approach to grant making entails and identified four stages in the life of a programme. These stages are defined as follows:

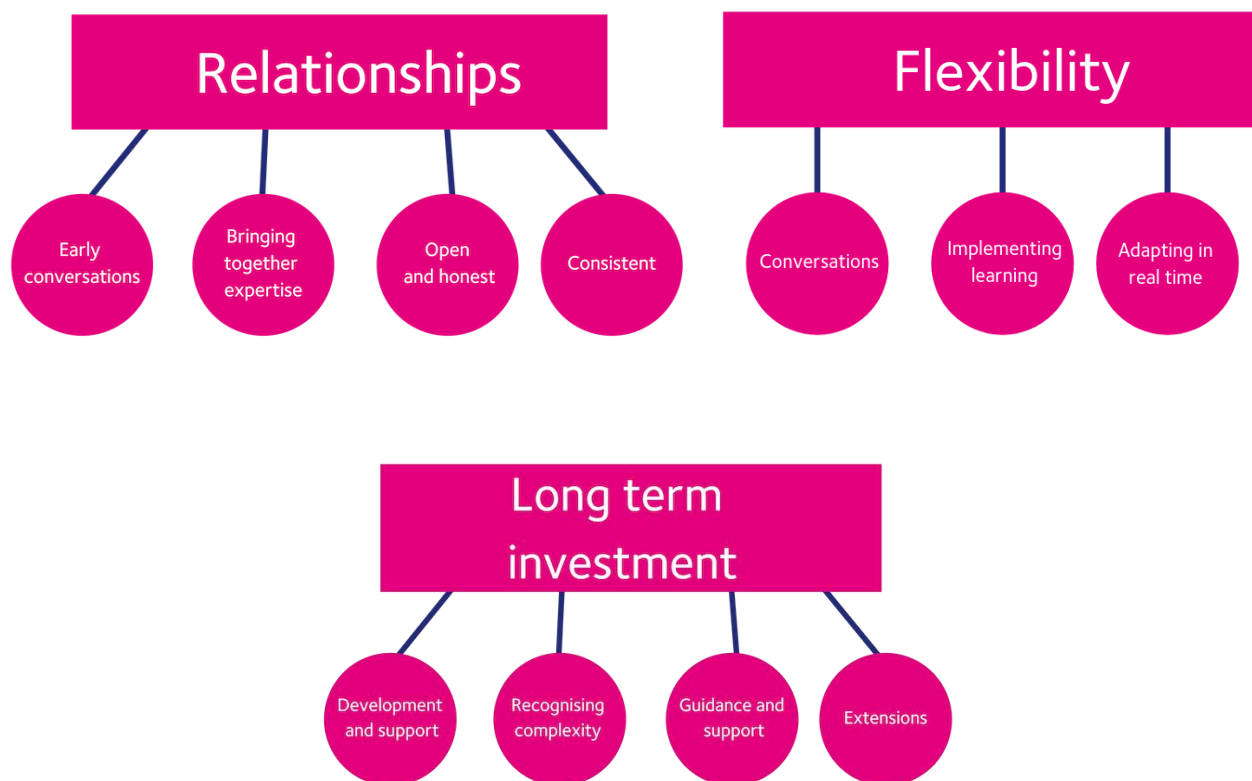


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<sup>1</sup> We had a Development and Support contract with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) and the Centre for Effective Services (CES). As part of this contract, CES published three reports which are available here: <https://www.effectiveservices.org/resources/impact-of-alcohol>.

## What have we learned?

Our learning shows that there are three key aspects to our grant making approach, namely: **Relationships**; **Flexibility** and **Long-term Investment**. Within each of these areas are several specific themes:



- Our model of grant making is about an approach rather than a specific process. By this we mean that the focus is always on achieving a shared aim or goal rather than how that aim is reached. The key aspects of our approach are developing strong, positive relationships, working flexibly and recognising the need for long-term investment. We, and the organisations that we have supported, have seen the value of this grant making approach.
- **Relationships:** We recognise that effective partnerships between organisations are ultimately about relationships between people. Our approach provided opportunities for systems change by strengthening relationships between sectors and practitioners through raising awareness, knowledge sharing and increased networking. One legacy of the Impact of Alcohol is the establishment of the Northern Ireland Drug and Alcohol Alliance (NIADA), a partnership of third sector organisations that provide support to those affected by drug and alcohol misuse and their families.
- **Flexibility:** A hallmark of a National Lottery grant is the flexibility that it brings. We appreciate that contexts will change over time and understand that the services delivered will need to respond to those changes and unexpected outcomes. This flexibility means that learning can be applied in real-time to support the delivery of high-quality, effective work that provides the maximum benefit for people being supported by the organisation.
- **Long-term investment:** We recognised that alcohol-related harm was and remains a complex issue; long-term investment provides time and space for organisations to

test and learn innovative ways to tackle that complexity. Development and support, including development funding, provide opportunities for smaller organisations to be involved in programmes. Investment extends beyond the amount of money initially awarded, and includes the guidance and support we can provide along with providing organisations with time and space to iterate and problem-solve.

- We also learned that while the two-strand approach did create some opportunities for collaboration across sectors, it meant that the programme was different across the two strands and across Trusts.

### **How have we used this learning?**

Since we launched the Impact of Alcohol in 2010, we have implemented our new strategic framework [People in the Lead](#) and improved our grant making approach. Some of the improvements capture a number of challenges identified by our learning. These include:

- Adopting more conversational approach to pre-award support and the assessment process. We received feedback on length of time to apply through the multiple stages of the programme.
- There was a missed opportunity to support the delivery of the portfolios through developing stronger relationships with all the programme partners.

### **Recommendations**

We can make the following recommendations based on our learning from this programme. While much of our learning relates to our position as a grant maker, we can see how the recommendations that stem from it could also apply to commissioning:

- Building strong, positive relationships - and maintaining them throughout the funding relationship - creates successful partnerships. Our experience in Impact of Alcohol was that they enabled open, honest conversations where different expertise could come together to think about how to address issues, share learning and network.
- Everyone involved in a funding programme should have clear guidance about what the programme is trying to achieve from the outset. Understanding and focusing on a shared aim and strategic vision enables flexibility to adapt how services are delivered in real-time to ensure that they meet the needs of the people using them.
- When working across sectors, consider the wider context and existing relationships in play. This understanding should inform programme development and also contribute to post-award support as they will impact on what is achieved by the programme. Feedback highlighted that we may have not considered how the third sector and Health and Social Care Trusts already worked together through contracts and what this meant about working in partnership.
- Alcohol-related harm is a complex issue, as are many of the issues experienced by individuals, families and communities. We were aware of this complexity, which was why we ensured we had a long-term investment in the programme which included development and support for grant holders, flexibility and extensions as required. Appreciating and recognising complexity will inform the amount of resources required to address issues and should also be taken into account when measuring what has been achieved.